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SETH SHOWING GRACE HIS WOODPILE. Frontispiece.

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NO. 24 CORNHILL.

Standard Series of Temperance Tales.

Mark Dunning's Enemy.

BY MARY DWINELL CHELLIS.

AUTHOR OF MOLLY'S BIBLE, EFFIE WINGATE'S WORK, ETC.

BOSTON:

HENRY A. YOUNG & CO.

NO. 24 CORNHILL.

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Standard Series of Temperance Tales.

VOL. 1. BILL DROCK'S INVESTMENT.

" II. THE OLD DOCTOR'S SON.

" III. MARK DUNNING'S ENEMY.

" IV (IN PREPARATION.)

Mark Dunning's Enemy.

CHAPTER I.

November's darkness, storm and gloom;
A drunkard's sin and shame and doom.

NOVEMBER, saddest month of all the year. All day the rain had pattered quietly on dead leaves; but as evening shadows deepened, the fury of the storm increased. Murky clouds drifted heavily athwart the sky, while the fierce wind swept down hillsides and through valleys, dashing large, round drops alike, pitilessly, upon the half-roofed cottage of the poor, and the elegant mansion of the rich.

Flora Hanson, a beautiful girl thirteen years of age, stood by an east window, watching the lights in the distance, and shuddering when a gust of unusual force swayed the tall trees, threatening to lay them prostrate. Involuntarily she uttered some ejaculation, when a woman's voice said, "Do, Flo, come away from that window. It's bad enough to hear the howling and plashing of wind and rain, without anything more of the same sort."

"Excuse me, mother. I didn't intend to speak, and if you are willing, I would rather stay here by the window. I can look down into the village and see the lights."

"Then stay. It makes no difference to me, if you are still."

So Flora retained her position, and presently the rumbling of a cart was heard, with the loud voice of John, man of all work, calling for some one to meet him at the barn.

"John is very late," said Mrs. Hanson, in a fault-finding tone. "I heard your father say he ought to have been here before dark."

"He must have had business, mother. He wouldn't stay out in the storm, unless he was obliged to."

"Well, no matter about the reason. I wish your father or Walter could find time to think of me. It has been the dullest day I ever saw; and now this evening they must shut themselves up in the library."

"But Walter is learning his lessons. I thought you wished him to be a great scholar."

"So I do; and there is time enough for that by and by. He is only nine years old. But your father is so unreasonable, he hears to nothing I can say."

"Walter wishes to study this evening, mother. You know he is thinking about the prize."

"So he is. I had forgotten that," said Mrs. Hanson. "I wish he might get the prize; but so long as this teacher remains, there is little prospect of it. She favors the Dunning children, and Barton is in the same class with Walter. I wish that family would leave town. I am glad one of them is out of the way."

There was no response to this, and soon after, Flora went to the kitchen, to see if John had come in, and hear what report he might bring. As she opened the door, he was saying, "I can't stop longer than to drink a cup of tea, and eat a bite of something. If Dunning is alive, he must be found, and Grace don't want to make a stir about it."

"What is it, Uncle John? Is Mr. Dunning lost again?"

"Yes, child. He's been missing since just after noon, and looking for him is what

made me so late home. I didn't mean to let your folks know anything about it, though."

"Perhaps he is in the lower summer house," suggested Flora.

"He may be," answered the man whom she addressed as Uncle John; and hurrying from the room, his lantern was soon seen flashing in and out through the avenue of leafless trees. At length the light disappeared for a short time, and when seen again, was stationary, seeming to be held aloft in the air.

"That means he wants help," said Mrs. Forbes, or Aunt Sarah, as she was usually called in the family. "I shall go down there myself," she added.

"But you will be very wet," answered her companion.

"Of course I shall. No matter for that, though, if I'm needed. If you see the lantern again in the place where it is now, tell your father Mark Dunning is down there."

"Yes, Aunt Sarah, I will."

To equip herself in blanket, shawl, hood, and rubber boots, required but short time for the good woman, and then Flora was left alone. Directly, however, the chore boy came in and sat down by the warm stove, wondering a little, yet asking no questions. Five minutes passed, when a bell struck, and the boy said, "Mr. Forbes came towards the house a good while ago."

"Yes, he has been in," answered Flora.

"Where shall I go to find him?"

"You needn't look for him. I will tell father."

"Mighty strange about things here," muttered the inmate of the kitchen. "Old man and young woman. Nice girl and — But it's none of my business."

Flora glided through the long hall, and stood in her father's presence.

"I was expecting John," he said, looking up. "I rang the bell for him."

"Yes, father, but John isn't in the house, and I came to tell you."

"How is that? I heard him some time ago. He ought to report himself. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, sir. He went down to the lower summer house."

"For what, Flo?" and, naturally, he walked to the window which overlooked that part of the grounds where this house was situated. "What does that light mean? It looks as though it was near the top of the house. No, some one is holding it," he added, speaking more to himself than his daughter. "What can it mean?"

"It means that Mr. Dunning is there, father."

"Mr. Dunning!" repeated the man, his voice quivering with some ill-concealed emotion. "How do you know that, child?"

"Because Mr. Dunning has been lost since

noon, and Uncle John has been looking for him. Aunt Sarah said if they wanted you to know, they would hold the lantern as it is now, and I must tell you. Perhaps Mr. Dunning forgot but what this was his home, just as it used to be. What a pity it is he is so poor, when he has such nice children. Grace is so pretty, too."

"Hush, child. How you do run on! It's just as your mother says. There is no end to your talking. I suppose I may as well go down and see what the matter is. If that crazy fellow is there, he must be taken care of."

This library was a pleasant room; its furniture and adornments indicating refined tastes and liberal means. It was hardly in keeping with the looks and general appearance of him who had occupied an arm chair near the table, strewed with books and papers. His face was that of a shrewd, it might be,

unscrupulous business man, a good liver, and free drinker. Distorted now with anger, it was absolutely repulsive; yet when occasion required, Alfred Hanson could command smiles and flattering words. The idea of encountering such a storm, under any circumstances, would have been disagreeable, still more so was it now, when he dreaded the revelation each step might make.

"What is the matter here?" he asked, when he reached the termination of his walk.

"Matter enough," was the reply. "Look there;" and John Forbes held the lantern so that its light fell full upon the face of a man, who at first sight, seemed to be sleeping.

"Mark Dunning!"

"Yes, and I've been trying to rouse him. But it's more than I can do."

"This is unfortunate," said Mr. Hanson. "How came the fellow here?"

"I presume he walked. He isn't able to keep a carriage," answered John, with marked emphasis.

"And what is to be done with him, now he is here?"

"Take care of him; and it must be done quick. He must be carried to the house."

"That would be very awkward," was the cold reply.

"It might be *more* awkward to have him die here. People would be likely to talk about it."

"Is my husband here?"

So occupied had been the trio that they had not noticed the approach of the speaker. She stood where the rain beat upon her, yet gave it no heed, repeating the question, which surprise had not allowed to be answered.

"Yes, Cousin Grace, your husband is here," said Mrs. Forbes. "Come in from the rain."

"No, Sarah, I only want my husband. I could think of no other place to look for him, or I shouldn't have come here. Mark," she called, softly.

"Your husband seems to be sleeping," said Mr. Hanson, with apparent effort at self-control. "At least, we have not been able to rouse him."

At these words, the lantern which Mrs. Dunning carried fell from her grasp, and the next moment she was kneeling upon the damp floor, one hand clasping that of the unconscious man, and the other upon his forehead. A curse sprang to the lips of Alfred Hanson; but remembering himself, he set his teeth firmly, and turned away.

Short time did Mrs. Dunning give to idle grief. "How can Mark be carried home?" she asked, addressing her cousin.

"He can't be taken home in the condition he is now," was the reply. "It would be

impossible. Something must be done for him at once."

"But——"

"No buts, Cousin Grace. It is life or death now. Mark is chilled by exposure to the cold and wet." Mr. Hanson echoed these words, offering the hospitalities of his house, with well feigned cordiality.

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Dunning. "But home is the best place for my husband, and I shall esteem it a favor if some way can be provided for taking him there."

John Forbes was about to speak in answer to this, when a quick, firm step was heard, and while the inmates listened eagerly, a boy sprang in, calling, "father, mother." His mother's own child. The same lustrous black hair, deep, dark eyes, clearly cut features, and resolute mouth. A boy, indeed, in years, yet his symmetrical, well-knit frame gave him the appearance of greater maturity.

"How is this, Arthur?" asked Mrs. Dunning, in surprise.

"Mr. Clement sent me within five miles of home, on business, and said I could spend the night with you, if I would be back early in morning. So I came; and it is well that I did."

Mr. Hanson stood looking at the new comer in mute astonishment. So handsome, strong, and self-reliant, any parent might well be proud of him.

Mrs. Forbes understood the feelings of all present, and was seeking to devise some plan for avoiding the necessity of taking Mark Dunning into the house of her employer, when the prostrate man slowly opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he gasped, a moment after. "Where am I?" he repeated, instantly. "Tell me where I am?"

"In the old summer house," answered Arthur.

"Uncle Mark's old summer house?"

"Yes, father; and we had better go home now. It is dark and rainy. I have come over to spend the night with you. You have been asleep here."

"Yes, I must have fallen asleep, and I am so chilled now, I can hardly move. You here too, Grace?" he added, observing his wife.

Then he made an effort to rise, and with his son's assistance, stood upon his feet. There was need for haste in getting him home, as those who looked upon him well knew. The wild light in his eyes, and the convulsive working of his face betrayed intense excitement.

Mr. Hanson, who had stepped without the shelter of the house, now calling John, told him to harness the horse to the carriage, and take the whole family home. "Give Mark Dunning some dry clothing, and see that he is made comfortable."

The sound of his voice produced a fearful effect upon the man of whom he spoke. "Traitor! Villain!" hissed the latter. "You robbed me of everything but Grace, dear Grace. She loved me if I *was* poor, and you couldn't buy her from me."

"Hush, hush, Mark. Don't talk so. We are going home to the children now. Don't say anything to trouble me."

But the spell was upon him, and there might have been a tragedy, had not the master of these grounds wisely withdrawn, leaving others to dispose of the unwelcome intruder.

The event proved that Mark Dunning needed little assistance. It was only necessary to keep pace with his hasty strides, as straight on he rushed, with the utmost speed, pausing for nothing, until he stood in the highway. Then, as though addressing a visible person, he shouted forth denunciations and curses.

In vain was he urged to desist. He shook his son from him with an oath. He was mad with rage and intoxicating drink. Above the wail of the storm his voice could be heard; and Alfred Hanson, who, held by some power he had not the will to resist, listened, tremblingly.

He was rich and prosperous, as the world counts riches and prosperity. His home sheltered wife and children, and he computed his gains by thousands. From comparative obscurity he had risen to his present position; and men delight to honor those whom fortune favors. "Traitor! Villain!" Strange words to be addressed to him; yet they rang in his ears, and seemed branded upon his very heart, as with a red hot iron. One gust of wind after another swept by, yet they did not drown the tones of that clear shrill voice.

Standing there in the darkness, with no eye but God's upon him, hot blushes of shame

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and conscious guilt flushed the cheeks of the listener. His thoughts went back to the time when he had first looked upon the beautiful retreat he now called home. Many years had passed since then; already past the meridian of life, aged, too, for his years, he had small enjoyment of all which he possessed.

Morose and gloomy, except with Walter, he seldom unbent from his usual sternness in his family. Twice married, Flora was the daughter of his first wife, who had been quite unlike her whom the young girl now addressed as mother. Walter was the idol of his parents; a boy who, despite the coldness and disregard for the feelings of others he sometimes manifested, was yet attractive and interesting. As his wishes were usually consulted, outbursts of temper were with him of rare occurrence; and his mother pronounced him "a little gentleman."

At thought of his boy, Alfred Hanson re-

proached himself for being moved by the ravings of a mad man. What was Mark Dunning to him? He entered the house, threw aside his wet garments, and went to the library, where he hoped to be alone.

"O father, has Mr. Dunning gone home?"

This was the question which greeted him, and to which he replied, "Yes, I hope so."

"Was that he talking so loud?"

"Yes, and now Flo, do go away. I am tired, and have heard enough for one evening. Go stay with your mother," he added, noticing the grieved look in his child's face.

She went to the parlor, and took her place again by the window, dropping a heavy curtain which separated her from the other inmates of the room. Soon Walter, who really loved his sister, went to her, notwithstanding his mother's complaints at being deserted.

"I've learned every word of my lesson," he said, joyously. "I wish I could get the prize;

and I could, if it wasn't for Bart Dunning. He never misses once. I most wish he would sometimes."

"It isn't right to wish that, Walter."

"I know it, and I don't really; though mother says I ought to be the best scholar, because my father is the best man. She says I shouldn't let such a ragamuffin as Bart Dunning beat me."

"Barton isn't a ragamuffin," answered Flora, softly. "I never saw him have on ragged clothes."

"Nor I either," rejoined her brother. "His clothes are patched; but I like him, and I'd rather he'd have the prize than anybody else, if I can't get it. Father thinks we're pretty small boys to be working for a prize. I guess the teacher thought we should study harder, if she offered a prize."

"Yes, of course she did, and I wish our teacher would offer a prize."

"Should you get it, Flo?"

"No. I think Grace Dunning would get it. She is the best scholar in our class."

"Is she as old as you are?"

"No, a year younger."

"Then she is just twelve; and oh my! isn't she pretty? A little prettier than you are, Flo."

"Yes, Walter, a great deal prettier than I am."

"I guess not a great deal prettier, though perhaps she would be, if she wore handsome dresses," said the boy. "When I'm a man I'll give her some, just to see. Did you know she's our cousin? Mother says they aint much cousins; and they can't be; else they wouldn't live in such a little house, and we in a large one."

Mrs. Hanson overheard snatches of this conversation, and again wished the Dunning family would leave town. Mark was a dis-

grace to himself and every one connected with him, however remotely. Had she heard his accusations that evening, she might have desired his absence for a different reason.

Mr. Hanson was alone in his library, pacing the floor with quick, nervous steps, wondering what next would come to him and others. Mark Dunning was the bane of his life. Not often did they meet; never intentionally, unless the former was excited by intoxicating drink.

More than an hour passed, and yet John Forbes did not return. Another hour went by, and solitude became insupportable. His wife looked up as he entered the parlor, but the expression of his face did not invite a greeting. The children were sitting at the table, Flora, as usual, devoting herself to her brother. He glanced at them for a moment, and then commenced his monotonous tread.

"I do wish you wouldn't walk this evening.

It always makes me nervous, and after such a day as I have had, it is intolerable."

Walter called his father's attention, and thus the complaint seemed to be heeded.

"Bed time for children," he remarked, as the clock struck nine; and soon after he left the room, saying that he had some accounts to look over, and must sit up late.

It would have been nearer the truth to say that he had some accounts to *think* over; but he was not scrupulous in regard to the truth. At eleven o'clock there was a rap on his study door, and as he opened it, the pale face of Mrs. Forbes was seen.

"Come in, and sit down," he said.

"I can't stop for that," answered the woman. "I came to tell you that John can't leave Mr. Dunning to-night."

"Have you just come from there?"

"Yes, the doctor brought me to the gate."

"How is he, Mark, I mean?"

"Raving mad, though more quiet than he has been. It has taken three men, besides John, to keep him on the bed."

"Can't something be done for him?"

"Something *has* been done."

"Have his family what they need to make them comfortable? If not, I wish you would provide for them, on my account."

"They require no more than their friends are able and willing to provide," was the reply.

"I am a friend to them," said Mr. Hanson, glad of an opportunity to speak upon this subject. "I know Mark considers me an enemy, but ——"

"We won't talk of that now," answered Mrs. Forbes. "Mark is his own worst enemy. Good night."

True. No enemy however powerful and malicious, can so work a man's ruin as his own unbridled passions and depraved appetites.

Dowered with all natural gifts, which, rightly improved, commanded the highest success in life, Mark Dunning was a drunkard; and, but for his family, would have been a wandering outcast.

In sober moments, he shrank from himself with horror, shuddering at the thought of crimes, which, in his madness, he contemplated with delight. His finely organized brain, delicate perceptions, and quick sensibilities made him far more susceptible to the use of stimulants, than one of coarser mold.

Call such, weak, if you will; but of such are they who charm the world with poetic numbers and creations of beauty. The man, upon whose uncovered head the storm beat that wild November night, but for one fatal habit, might have stood among the proudest of the land. His eloquence might have swayed the hearts of men, and turned them at his will.

Yet he raved; with method, perhaps; still, it was madness which prompted the utterance of frightful curses and imprecations. How long he might have braved the storm, no one could tell, as Dr. Graves, a physician whom he had known and respected from boyhood, fortunately passing that way, came to the rescue. With the doctor's previous acquaintance, he needed to ask no questions of the group before him. He comprehended all at a glance.

"Good evening, Mark," he said, cheerfully. "Rather rough, this evening, and you are some distance from home. You had better ride with me. I should like some company."

"Can't ride, to-night," was the quick reply. "There is a murder case on trial, and I am the prosecuting attorney. Hard case, too; plenty of money on the other side, witnesses bribed and all that. But I am bound the murderer shall swing."

"That's right," answered the doctor, humoring his fancy. "Do your duty. But I haven't heard much about the case; so I must depend upon you for particulars. Take a seat with me, and let us talk it over. The trial can't go on without you, and an open air court ought to adjourn, such weather as this."

The frenzied man hesitated, hurled one more denunciation at his invisible foe, and then sprang into the buggy.

"We will drive slow and take the longest way. Men, like you and me, needn't fear a little wet; and if anybody wants to go faster than we do, we shan't be offended if they pass us. If we were walking, we could cross the footbridge, but it is hardly wide enough for our carriage."

These last remarks, so little pertinent to the matter in hand, were made in a loud voice, and intended as a suggestion to those who stood silently by the road side.

"That's a good hint," said John Forbes, a moment after, as the doctor drove slowly away. "We can take the short cut across, and get to the house before they do."

"Let us do so, then," replied Mrs. Dunning. "Perhaps Mark will forget he has seen us, if we are home first, and it will be so much better for the children."

Arthur went first, the others following as best they could; and all were gathered around a warm stove, when Dr. Graves drove up. Calling, in his familiar way, John Forbes went out, saying, as he did so, "A wet night, doctor."

"Yes, wet enough. I overtook our friend Mark, and have brought him home. Riding is more agreeable than walking, such a night as this. He has been telling me something of a case in which he is engaged, and I believe I will come in and hear more of it."

"Do so, doctor, and I will put your horse

and buggy under the shed. My wife and I have just walked over."

"Then we shall have quite a party of friends. But, Mark, you are not going to leave us," added the doctor, grasping firmly the man thus addressed.

It required the united strength of three to force Mark Dunning into the house, where he seemed bent upon the destruction of everything within his reach. Grace and Barton, accustomed as they were to their father's wild freaks, were terrified, and at a whisper from Arthur, went upstairs to their rooms. Persuasions and mild measures failed. Even the doctor's commands were unheedeed.

"You must lie down," he said.

"Lie down!" thundered Mark Dunning, in reply. "Lie down in—." But I will not repeat the horrid, soul-sickening language he used.

His brain was on fire, lurid lights danced

before his eyes, and he was suffering such torments as no pen can describe. He *would* not, *could* not rest. His wife, herself unnaturally calm, sought to soothe him, addressing him by the endeared names which had so often thrilled his heart; but these were worse than idle words.

There was no alternative. He must be treated like a raving maniac, as he really was. More help was summoned. With hands and limbs pinioned, he was laid upon the bed, and forced to swallow a powerful opiate. For a time, this produced no good effect; indeed, it seemed to aggravate the malady it was intended to soothe. Shrieks, groans, gnashing of teeth, and exhibitions of almost superhuman strength, alternated with pitiful pleadings for mercy, and wild cries for assistance.

Those who listened could never forget. If Arthur Dunning had needed anything to

convince him that there was but one safe path for him, he would need it no more. Young, yet old enough to comprehend the full force of what he saw and heard, the syren of the wine cup could never lure him to her embrace.

"This is an attack of genuine horrors," said one man to another, when, in an interval of comparative quiet, they could relax their vigilance. "Dunning can't live through many like this."

"The fewer the better," was answered. "Guess the doctor thinks so, too, by his looks. There must be a last time, and it wouldn't be strange if we have come to it."

This half whispered conversation was interrupted by outcries which might well appal men of the strongest nerves. At length, about ten o'clock, the paroxysms subsided, and at eleven, one attendant was thought sufficient. Mrs. Forbes returned home, while her husband remained.

"What time must you be off in the morning, Arthur?" he asked.

"Before light. I ought to be in the store by eight o'clock, at the latest, and I have twelve miles to ride."

"Then go to bed this minute. You will have short time enough for rest."

"Yes," added Mrs. Dunning; "Go to bed and rest, my son. I am sorry your visit has been so unpleasant."

"But I am glad I came," responded the boy, following his mother into another room. "You needed me. Haven't I been of some use?"

"Yes, indeed, Arthur; but I would have spared you this trial."

"Why should you, mother? I can bear it as well as you, and better. I am glad I came at this time. I shall want to see father before he goes out again, and shall come home again as soon as possible."

"Why, Arthur?"

"Because I must talk with him, if I *am* only a little boy. I thought father was doing well. Dr. Graves told me so, only last week. How did this happen?"

"I don't know. Your father was very much depressed this morning, and went out early. When he came in, I knew he had been drinking. He went out again after dinner, and I presume drank again. He is so easily affected that a very small quantity of liquor unmans him. Oh, if it were possible for him to break off entirely, I should be the happiest woman in the world."

"It *is* possible," answered Arthur. "I have read a good deal upon the subject lately, and hard as it is for such a man as father to give up the use of stimulants, it can be done. I know it can."

"But your father has tried. He wishes to redeem his life; but he seems to have lost the power of self-control."

"No, mother, I am not willing to believe quite that. He hasn't tried in the right way."

"I know of but one way, and that is to abstain entirely. I don't think your father had tasted any kind of liquor for more than a month, until to-day."

"But he smokes."

"Yes. That seems to be a great comfort to him, and it is certainly a harmless indulgence."

"I am not sure of that, mother. In the first place, it takes money, which is needed to buy comforts for you and the children. Then I heard some one say, the other day, that a drunkard could never reform, so long as he used tobacco. If I was in father's place, I would give it up, and never touch it again."

Mrs. Dunning wondered at and almost blamed herself for sitting there discussing

her husband's faults. But since Arthur had left home, she was beginning to have great confidence in him; and as he shared the misery inflicted by his father, it was proper that he should speak of it.

Barton was wide awake, when his brother lay down beside him. "O, dear, don't you wish there wouldn't anybody ever get drunk," he sobbed. "It's awful; a great deal worse than being dead. Grace said so, and she cried, ever so long. I shouldn't wonder if she's crying now. You won't go away again, will you?"

"I must," replied Arthur, making an effort to speak cheerfully. "I must go, before light, in the morning, and you must help mother all you can. How do you get along at school?"

"First rate. I shall get the prize. I haven't missed once. It's going to be worth a dollar, and I wish the teacher would give

it to me, in money, so I can give it to mother. She don't have but little money."

"Well, Barty, don't talk about that now. Mother shall have all the money she wants sometime. Have you prayed to-night?"

"No. I felt so bad I couldn't. Seems to me I don't love God so well as I used to."

"That won't do, Barty. You must pray all the more when everything looks dark."

"But I can't," and here the boy wept unrestrainedly. It makes me feel wicked when some of the scholars tell me father is a drunkard, and my clothes are all patched."

How gladly Arthur would have borne all this for the dear young brother, cradled in his arms! But each heart, be it young or old, must bear its own burdens. Yet prayer, offered by one, comforted both, and Barty fell asleep.

Arthur hardly knew if he had slept at all, when the striking of the clock warned him that it was time to rise.

His mother, hearing him move, hastened to prepare breakfast, and while the stars yet shone, he started on his ride. His visit at home had been very different from what he expected, and a boy with less self-reliance and less trust in God would have been utterly disheartened. But Arthur Dunning was naturally hopeful. The first rays of the sun cheered him as a special manifestation of kindness, and when the hill tops, one after another, were bathed in rosy light, all gloom and dispondency fled.

Not that he forgot the dear and suffering ones at home, or was unmindful of the trials which beset his path. He could neither forget or be unmindful; yet he had faith that in God's good time, deliverance would be wrought.

As he told his mother, he had read much upon the subject of intemperance, and his reading had been accompanied with earnest

thought. He had listened eagerly to the experience of reformed men, and believing that reform was possible for his father, he pleased himself with fancies of what life might be to them all in the future.

Well for him that he could not look in upon the home circle. Had he done so, his feelings would have undergone a sudden revulsion.

His father had awakened to a dim consciousness of what had transpired. He remembered having gone to the old summer house, and there resting. He had a confused idea of having seen Alfred Hanson, and from his present weakness and suffering, inferred something of what had followed. The pale, haggard face of his wife, showed that she had passed a sleepless night; and raising his eyes to hers, he said, "You must *hate* me now, if you have not before."

"I can never hate you, my husband," she answered.

"I hate *myself*," he cried, wildly. "O, Grace, if I dared, I would rid you of my presence. I am not fit to live, and God knows I am not fit to die. Curses on the man who profited by my ruin."

"Mark —." Only a word; but the sweet tone in which it was spoken, and the soft hand laid lightly upon his forehead, made him repent the angry expression.

"Forgive me. But I am such a wretch that I deserve no mercy from God or you."

"Not a wretch, Mark. You can never be that."

"Then what am I? Have I not dragged you down, almost to the bottomless pit, ruined myself, and beggared my children? I dreamed of Arthur, last night. He is a noble boy, *our* boy, Grace."

Here the wretched father buried his face in the pillows, and wept such tears as, wrung from the agonies of remorse, seem like drops

of liquid fire. A moment, and raising his head, he threw the pillows to the extreme corner of the room, exclaiming, "I'm not going to lie here. I have been here long enough. My clothes, Grace. Bring me my clothes. I am going out."

"Where are you going, Mark?"

"Going where I can get something to drink. I'd sell my soul for a bottle of brandy, and make a good bargain at that. I am dying with thirst. Give me — Give me —"

He had overrated his strength. This outburst, with the effort of rising, quite exhausted him, and he fell to the floor. Mrs. Dunning, with the aid of her children, attempted to lay him upon the bed; but failing in this, was forced to let him remain where he had fallen.

So soon as he could speak, he insisted upon going out. He could not live without brandy.

"Do send Barty for some," he urged, when convinced that he had not strength to go himself. "Barty, come here."

The boy obeyed. "What, father?" he asked.

"I want you to go to Leet's and get a pint of brandy. Your mother must give you money to pay for it."

Would she? This was the severest trial to which Mrs. Dunning had ever been subjected. She had no money, except what Arthur had given her the evening before; and this was needed to buy food for her family. Moreover, her children had endured enough of disgrace, without being subjected to this last, most humiliating of all.

The child stood silent, with quivering lips, looking from one parent to the other.

"You can't mean that you wish Barton to go for brandy."

"I do mean it," shouted Mark Dunning.

"I am in a hurry, too, and the sooner he goes, the better it will be for him. Don't you hear what I say, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why don't you start?"

"Because —"

"Leave the room, Barton," interrupted his mother, choosing to bring the storm upon her own head.

The father was furious. "I *will* have brandy," he cried. "I will have it. I will drink it and die. That will be an end of me, Grace, and you can be a lady. Yes, a lady. Why didn't you marry Alfred Hanson, and live in Uncle Mark's old home? You wouldn't have been the wife of a drunkard, if you had. Give me some brandy."

"I will give you some coffee, Mark. It is very good, and very strong."

"Then bring it, quick. But I'll have the brandy for all that."

Coffee, strong as it was, did not satisfy him. He asked if Barton had gone, and was greatly excited when told that he had not.

Mrs. Dunning was a woman of rare fortitude and self-possession; yet these were beginning to fail, when, happily, the good doctor made his appearance; and glad to escape from her husband's presence, she left them together.

I will not repeat all their conversation, which was, at first, scarcely more than disconnected utterances on one side, and soothing replies on the other.

"I have some medicine with me, which I think will do you good," at length said the visitor, taking from his coat pocket a flask, containing some dark colored liquid.

"Is it brandy, doctor?"

"No, Mark, I wouldn't give you brandy, unless to save your life. You have too much of that, any way."

"I hadn't drinked a drop for a month, till yesterday."

"I thought so," was the reply. "I told Arthur, last week, that you were doing well, and would soon open an office again."

"And did you believe it, doctor?"

"Yes, I did; and others believed it, too. If I were in your place, Mark Dunning, I would retrieve my name and fortune. You can do it, if you will."

A wonderful change passed over the face of the man to whom this was said. "It isn't possible," he murmured. "Think where I am now."

"I do think, I know all about it."

"No you don't, doctor. There are some things one knows only by experience. If you have anything for me, give it to me now."

A wine glass full was given to him, with the remark, "It is not very palatable; but it is what you need."

"No matter whether it is palatable or not. I can drink anything was the reply. "I am crazy with thirst."

"Never mind that, now. We are going to talk of business."

"But I haven't any business."

"Don't interrupt me," said the doctor, smiling. "I was at Mrs. Conant's day before yesterday and she consulted me in regard to some property left by her husband. It seems that he bought a piece of land of William Giles' widow; and now the old man's son claims the land."

"How can he do that?" asked Mark Dunning.

"He says his stepmother had no right to sell the land and couldn't give a clear title."

"Yes, she could. I know all about that."

"Mrs. Conant said you did and asked me if——"

"If I was fit to be trusted," interrupted the listener.

"Well, about the same as that, Mark, and I told her that you were."

"I wish that was true."

"It was true when I told her, and it will be true again. You can make it so."

"I wish I could. Tom Giles is a rascal, and I should like to show him up."

"Then do so. Mrs. Conant will put the business into your hands if you will accept it."

"Not as I am, now. Ten years ago I could have done it; but I am too far gone."

"Never say that, Mark, as long as life and your family are left. You ought to do well if only for the sake of your wife. I saw Mrs. Hanson pass her a few days ago, and I could not but notice the contrast between them.

"Grace is a queen beside that woman," exclaimed Mark Dunning, impulsively.

"That she is, and she should wear queenly garments," replied his companion.

"I know it. Think how I have dragged her down, though I love her better than my own soul."

"And do you love strong drink better than either?"

"No, I hate it," he hissed between his teeth. "I hate it, and yet I die of thirst without it."

"No, Mark, you don't die. You live, and you *must* live. Resolve once for all to give up this degrading habit."

"I *have* resolved, and from each resolve I fall still deeper. I tell you, doctor, you don't know anything about it."

"Have you had your breakfast?"

This question asked merely to divert attention, failed of its intended effect as was evinced by the reply. "I haven't thought of breakfast. All I want is something to drink."

Dr. Graves remained as long as other en-

gagements would permit, administering an opiate to his excited patient, and promising to call again before night. "Be sure that your husband doesn't go out to-day," he said to Mrs. Dunning as he left the house. "I don't think he has strength to go if he should try, but nobody knows what a man in his condition *can* do."

Breakfast was prepared and eaten by the other members of the family, although Mark Dunning refused to taste it, declaring that he loathed the sight of food. Nothing, however, was said in regard to brandy; and after a time, as he lay with closed eyes, he seemed to be sleeping.

The drugs administered by his physician were taking effect; and his wife was careful that he should not be disturbed. John Forbes in passing came to the door, and after enquiring for Mark, drove on without the usual loud commands to his oxen.

When the children had left for school, Mrs. Dunning had time for reflection ; and though her way was hedged in on every side she did not quite despair. A glorious morning had succeeded a tempestuous night. Might not such a morning dawn for her ? "

CHAPTER II.

Sad record of the misspent years ;
Sad record, blotted o'er with tears.

ABOUT a week after the events narrated in my first chapter, while riding through a remote part of the town, Dr. Graves accosted an elderly woman and invited her to take a seat in his buggy.

"I declare, doctor, it's you, aint it," was the reply.

"Certainly it is," he answered, laughing.

"Well, I'm glad of it. I've wanted to see you and I shan't be sorry to ride. I lent my horse to one of the neighbors to go a journey, and I'm walking over to my nephew's to have

a talk about that land. They say Tom Giles has feed all the lawyers in town to keep them on his side, and some folks think I'd better let him have his own way."

"Don't do that, Mrs. Conant. Just step right in here; or do you want me to get out and wait upon you same as though we were young folks.

"No, I don't want to be waited on; but I'm so aggravated about this business I can't think of much else."

With the doctor's assistance Mrs. Conant was soon seated beside him, when he listened to a long recapitulation of what this one and that one had said. "You see Giles has got the most money. He can afford to spend it, too, for the sake of getting that land into his hands; and the lawyers are such a set of scamps I wouldn't trust one of them. If Mark Dunning was what he used to be, I shouldn't be afraid to trust him."

"The best thing you can do is to trust him as it is."

"Why, doctor, they say he had a fit of delirium tremens, a few days ago."

"He did. There is no denying that, Mrs. Conant. It was a severe attack, too, and for a few hours, it was doubtful if he lived through it."

"There, I didn't more than half believe it; but if you say so, it must be true. I told neighbor Jones that you said Mark had reformed; but he said it was no such thing."

"Bad news travels fast."

"That's what I always say," rejoined Mrs. Conant. "If anything's wrong, it will be trumpeted from one end of town to the other. Now I haint had a single encouraging word said to me about this business with Giles, except what you said; and I've had more company within two months, than I've had before for three years. It beats everything how folks will talk."

Dr. Graves was sufficiently acquainted with his companion to understand that she must have her say before he could expect to be heard; and, truth to tell, she had been sorely tried with the condolence of well meaning, but ignorant people.

"Now, what should you do, if you was in my place, doctor?"

"Put the business into Mark Dunning's hands, and tell him to manage it as well as he can."

"Would it be safe?"

"I don't know. You asked me what I should do, and I told you."

"Well; *I* don't know, doctor. If Mark was a sober man, I'd risk it in a minute; but if he should get on a spree, just when court comes, I should lose my case, sure as preaching."

"I don't think there would be any danger. At any rate, you must put in a defense, or relinquish your claim."

"I know I must," said Mrs. Conant, after a short silence. "I'll go over to-morrow, and talk with Mark about it, though it makes me feel bad every time I see him. He was a promising boy."

"He was. He was," replied the doctor.

"So I say ; and nobody ever heard anything against him, till Alfred Hanson came round. I never understood that, and when the old gentleman died, and left Mark only a thousand dollars, I thought there was something wrong, somewhere. If Alfred Hanson had turned out a drunkard, I shouldn't thought strange, he's such a coarse grained piece."

"That's just the reason he isn't a drunkard. If Mark Dunning had been coarse grained, as you call it, he wouldn't be where he is now."

"Well, that beats me, doctor. But I suppose you know."

"I believe I do. Alfred Hanson has drank three times the liquor that our lawyer has."

"Then why don't he get drunk?"

"Because he is differently made up. But here we are, at your nephew's. I suppose you wish to stop."

"Yes, I may as well, as long as I have taken the trouble to come, though I don't want any more advice. I guess you've got the right of it; and I'll see Mark, some time this week."

"Do; and if you are sorry, charge the blame to me. Business is just what he needs, and you may help him to reform."

"Well, I'll try;" and the speaker entered the house of her relative, while Dr. Graves drove on, hoping that two would be benefited by the advice he had given.

Mrs. Conant could ill afford to lose the property at stake, and if Mark Dunning could prove her title good, he would serve both her and himself. The claimant would scruple at nothing. He was wealthy; and having once

commenced the suit, would not relinquish it, until fairly beaten.

As Mrs. Conant had decided, she carried her decision into effect at the earliest moment it could be done conveniently. She was a friend to the lawyer and his wife, having known them as children, and still feeling interested in their welfare, although she seldom met them.

"I won't go there empty handed," she said to her daughter. "If stories are true, they're poor enough, and Miss Dunning takes in dress-making. I'll carry some butter and cheese, and a few other little things. I'll find a way to leave them, without hurting any body's feelings."

"Then you won't say anything about their being poor, mother?"

"La, no, child. Don't you suppose I know better than to do that? I never twit folks of their poverty. Don't I live on a farm, and

aint it rulable for farmers to carry something, when they go visiting in the village? I guess 'tis. At any rate, I always carry something to the minister's, and he don't ever seem to feel bad about it, nor his wife, either. Miss Dunning's mother and I used to go to school together; and we were good friends, too. She was a nice woman; but she had a pretty hard time. Her husband was sick, and they didn't seem to get much beforehand. After he died, she worked hard to give Grace an education. The girl liked her books so well, her mother said she should have them, at any rate; but I guess she don't get much time to read now."

"I presume not, mother. But wouldn't it be well for you to pack up what you intend to carry? It is nine o'clock, and the days are short. You'll hardly have time to call on Mrs. Whitcomb, unless you start by ten."

"I shan't, that's a fact; but since my last

talk with the doctor I've thought so much about Mark Dunning and his wife. No matter about that now, though. Just bring the gallon jar and I'll put some of my best butter in it. Cut off a quarter of the cheese on the corner shelf, and I guess I'll take half a bushel of Lemon Pippins. Then, perhaps, I might as well fill the bag with Sweet Russets. They are good to bake; and, another thing, don't you suppose they would like some honey. We can spare that small box just as well as not."

Mrs. Bond, who was herself a widow, smiling at her mother's generous intentions, gave her assistance cheerfully. Other "little things" were added, until there was time for no more to be packed, when Mrs. Conant said, with a gentle sigh, "I guess that will do for once."

Mark Dunning was seated by a window looking out upon a dreary prospect when she

appeared. Turning to his wife, he said, "Here is one of your old friends. If she enquires for me, tell her I don't see company.

"How do you do, Miss Dunning. I'm glad to see you," was the visitor's hearty greeting.

"And I am glad to see you. Please to come in. It is a long time since you have called upon me."

"Yes, I know it. But you see I have to keep pretty busy about home." A little anxious after all as to how her donations would be received, Mrs. Conant did not heed the invitation to walk in, until it was repeated. "I guess I will come in a few minutes," she then answered. "I want to see your husband on a little business. You make me think of your mother," she added, after being seated. "You look more like her as you grow older."

"So people tell me, and I consider it a compliment," said Mrs. Dunning.

"You may. Your mother was a handsome woman, and she didn't seem to grow old like the rest of us."

"I don't see that you grow old, Mrs. Conant."

"But I do, and I feel it, too; though I'm pretty smart for a woman sixty-five years old. You know Matildy has come home to live with me, so we get along very well."

"Your granddaughter is with you, too."

"Oh, yes, she is the life of the house; singing like a bird from morning till night, and helping everybody."

"I have heard Grace speak of her," remarked the hostess. "They are in the same class in the Sabbath School, and Grace thinks Ella is the sweetest singer she ever heard."

"Her singing is sweet to me," replied the grandmother. I was reckoned to have a good voice when I was young, but it never was equal to Ella's.

All this time Mrs. Conant had been considering how she should get through with the first part of her business. To use her own words, "she never had a faculty for going round and round a thing and then coming up to it easy."

So now, after all her deliberations, she said, abruptly, "I've brought something for you. I told Matildy 'twas rulable when farmers called on the minister, and I guessed 'twould do as well for a lawyer. So I took along some butter and cheese, and a few other little things. I hope you won't be offended, Miss Dunning. I didn't suppose but what you had enough to eat."

"I am not offended, Mrs. Conant. You are very kind, and I am very grateful."

"La, child, don't say that. I didn't bring much. The things are out in the wagon, and I guess we might as well have them unloaded, right away. Then, I want to see your hus-

band about some business Tom Giles is making for me. I never was so beat about anything in my life, as I am about that."

Mrs. Dunning went out to assist in unloading the wagon ; a task which proved more arduous than she anticipated ; and many were the exclamations of gratitude, as one gift after another was carried into the house.

"Now there aint anything more but this bag of apples ; and if you'll take hold of one end, we can carry it without any trouble."

Mark Dunning had secretly watched proceedings up to this point ; but here his gallantry triumphed over the desire to remain unseen. "Good morning, Mrs. Conant," he said, presenting himself at the wagon. "If this bag is to be carried, I am the one to do it."

"Why, good morning, Mr. Dunning. I guess your wife will be glad to have you take hold. I don't suppose she's used to lifting a great deal."

"Where is this wanted?" asked the gentleman.

"Right in your kitchen," was the reply.

There were the proofs of Mrs. Conant's kindness, disposed in goodly array; for each and all of which thanks and praises were bestowed, until she felt obliged again to apologise for the liberty she had taken in bringing them.

Mark Dunning interrupted her, saying that they could nowhere have been more acceptable. "I am ashamed to acknowledge that my family needed just these things."

"Well, if you're glad of the things, I'm glad I brought them; so we won't say any thing more about it. I want to talk with you about that piece of land Tom Giles says belongs to him."

"Yes, Mrs. Conant, I have heard about that. Walk in this way;" and he opened the door, into a small, well furnished room, in the center of which was a table, covered

with books and papers. "Dr. Graves was speaking to me of Giles' claim."

"I expect you know all about it."

"I think I do. At any rate, I know enough to settle the matter. Giles is aware of it, too; but he counts on my degradation. Dr. Graves told me so, last evening; and I should be glad to show him that for once he builds his hope upon a poor foundation. I *can* defeat him, and I *will*, if you will trust the case to my management."

"That's just what I came for," responded Mrs. Conant. "The doctor told me I could trust you."

How her good, motherly face beamed with kindness, inviting confidence, and giving assurance of sympathy.

"But you know what my life has been for the past few years," said the lawyer.

"I know you haint done right, any more than the rest of us, and I have been sorry for

you, every day. I remember the first time you went into the old meeting house, with the man you called uncle. That was thirty years ago. I remember I told my husband about you, when I got home. I knew, by your looks, that you'd make a smart man; and I expected, with such bringing up as you'd have, that you'd be a good one."

"I ought to have been, and I *should* have been, but for one bad habit. I never wished to do any one an injury."

"I don't believe you did. I always heard you called a kind hearted boy; and when you was a young man folks expected a good deal of you."

"They have been sadly disappointed, Mrs. Conant. I have ruined myself and my family, too."

"You've got a good wife, Mark Dunning. I knew her mother; and she was a good woman. She set everything by Grace; and

there want a girl in town better brought up or thought more of than your wife."

"I know it; and she deserved a better home than I have made for her."

"Well, now, Mark," said the good woman, looking at him with tearful eyes and making a great effort to command her voice, "I didn't mean to call you Mark, but I used to when you was a boy, and it seems more natural. Why can't you turn right round and let folks see what you can do. Seems to me I would if I was in your place. It aint a good plan to drink so much. I haint anything to say against taking a glass once in a while as medicine; though I think most folks are better off without it. If I don't feel just right, I take a good dose of camomile or wormwood, and it livens me right up."

"Mrs. Conant, I would give ten years of my life if I could never see another drop of liquor. I hate it. My very soul *loathes* it;

yet I should drink it if it was before me. You can't understand such contradictions. No one can but a drunkard; and I am a drunkard."

"No you aint. You're a sober man, and you can keep so if you want to."

"I *do* want to," said the unhappy man. "I would rather die than drink again; but I have tried so many times to reform, and failed each time, that I have nearly lost faith in myself."

"It's my opinion you never can reform without help."

"And who is going to help me."

"God," replied Mrs. Conant, reverently. "Why, when anything troubles me I go right to God and tell him all about it. If I want help, I ask him."

"And do you always get it?"

"Yes, in one way or another; and I aint afraid to ask him about things most folks wouldn't think of praying for. I spread this

land business all out before him and it seemed right that I should come here."

"I am glad you came," said Mark Dunning.

"So am I. I told Matildy last night I felt as though I should be blessed in coming."

"You have blessed others in coming," was the reply. "It's a long time since I prayed, but I shall try now. There have been curses on my lips instead of prayers. A drunkard is not in the habit of praying."

"But you are not a drunkard. I never expect to hear you called by that name again. To-night, I am going to pray for you, especially, and I expect the Lord will hear me."

"And I will pray for myself. I will do it, vile as I am."

"Then there won't be much more trouble, if you only keep on praying. When you begin to think about drinking, no matter where you are, ask God to take away your desire for

liquor. It won't make any difference you know, if you don't speak a word. God sees our hearts."

"I will try," the lawyer answered; and there was something in the simple faith of his companion which inspired him with hope. She never troubled herself to discuss the question as to what prayers were acceptable, and what not; but more wise in her theology than many a learned scholar, she cast *all* her burdens upon the Lord.

This conversation, a small part of which I have transcribed, occupied much time; and in the midst of the talk about business, dinner was announced.

"Why, Miss Dunning, I never thought of staying to dinner," said the visitor. "I didn't mean to take off my things here, when I came from home. I calculated to get round to Miss Whitcomb's, before dinner time."

"You have not been here very long, Mrs. Conant. It is not one o'clock yet."

"Well, that's later than I should thought. I hope you didn't put yourself out any about dinner. Don't the children come home?"

"Not to-day," answered their mother. Grace wished to practice some new tunes with the scholars, and Barton didn't care to come home unless she did. Grace has a new singing book with which she is greatly pleased."

"It's the same they use in singing school, aint it," asked Mrs. Conant.

"The same, and I suppose Ella has one."

"To be sure. She wants every new singing book that comes along, though her mother thinks it's too far for her to come to singing school very often."

"It *is* quite a ride. Four miles to your place, isn't it?"

"All that, and a pretty rough road, too. I've thought sometimes, since I began to feel so old, that I'd give up my farm and move nearer the village; but I keep putting it off."

"Perhaps you'll conclude to build on the Dunn lot," said Mr. Dunning.

"I hardly think I shall," was the reply. "I suppose, though, that's what Tom Giles wants of it. There's a good site for a house a little north of that large elm, and there's an excellent spring of water near by. Mr. Conant used to talk about building there when he got too old to work on a farm."

After dinner, when Mrs. Conant was preparing to take her leave, she said to the lawyer, "Now you must tell me how much I ought to pay you. I don't understand law business; but I want to do the right thing."

"I think you left the retaining fee in the kitchen," was the answer she received.

"Don't talk about that. I brought them things to your wife, and they haint anything to do with this business."

Mr. Dunning really felt under obligations to her for entrusting the case to his care, and

thus giving him an opportunity to appear again in his professional capacity; but as she insisted, he accepted the usual retaining fee, after which, she went on her way rejoicing.

Mark Dunning had not been seen in the village since the day of the storm, and many enquiries were made in regard to him. As the doctor's carriage was seen at his door, some supposed that he was sick, and shook their heads gravely, while descanting upon the prospect of his recovery.

"He has been breaking down a good while," said one. "He looks ten years older than he ought to, and it wouldn't be strange if this should carry him off. They say he had a terrible fit the other night. He couldn't do anything better for his family than to die, and get out of the way."

"You are mistaken there, Shedd," replied another, standing by. "Reform would be vastly better than death. For my part, I

haven't given up the belief that he will do better, sometime. He is discouraged now. If a few of us could take hold and help him a little ——"

"I should like to know how that could be done," remarked a third. "Dunning is proud as ever, and don't want charity."

"No, that he don't," was the reply. "We must give him business, if anything."

"I don't know where you'd find anybody fool enough to do that," said a hard-featured man. "The way he managed his last case in court finished him. His uncle, as he called him, was wise, not to leave his property to Mark."

"I don't know about that," some one made answer. "I never understood that will. Mark was one of the best boys in town. Everybody liked him, and he was a great favorite. We expected he'd turn out smart."

"He *is* smart," responded the man who

had just said that his career, as a lawyer, was finished. "If he'd let liquor alone, he might be in Congress, within ten years. I tell you, he'd run ahead of any man in the district. Strange he must drink so."

"Strange he must drink at all," was the reply. "He never drinked a quarter of the liquor some men do, without anybody's thinking of it. It's the way he's made up. When he was a boy, the tears would come into his eyes, as quick as into a girl's; but he was a brave little fellow, after all. It seems too bad that he should die a drunkard."

"Who is that?" asked Dr. Graves, pausing by the group who discussed their neighbor's prospects."

"We were speaking of Mark Dunning," said one.

"He won't die a drunkard," responded the doctor. "I saw him an hour ago, busy with his papers, as he used to be; and you may

depend upon it that he is coming up. If I had any law business on hand, I should employ him."

The subject of this discussion sat industriously writing, with something of the old light in his face, and something of the old ambition in his heart. His wife entered the room, and looking up with a happy smile, he said, "Grace, I do believe I shall conquer, this time. Mrs. Conant was right when she said I could never do it alone. I am going to put my whole trust in God. I shall pray constantly that he will take away my terrible thirst for liquor, or give me strength to resist its cravings."

"Then I believe you will succeed, my husband."

"And you will pray for me, too, Grace."

"I have always prayed for you, Mark; always, since I first loved you, and that was so *many* years ago."

"And I thought I should make you so happy. I used to call you my queen; but this doesn't look much like a palace; and the king is only a poor, degraded man."

The half hour which followed was too sacred, with sweet confidence and mutual tenderness, to be unveiled for stranger eyes. The hope of one, and the good resolutions of the other, were strengthened. A rap at the door interrupted these communings.

"I have come to see your husband upon a little business," said one of the villagers, as Mrs. Dunning answered his summons. "Is he at home?"

"Yes, sir. Please walk this way."

Not for years had Mark Dunning stood before one of his townsmen with such an expression upon his really handsome face.

"Busy, I see," remarked the visitor.

"Somewhat," was the reply. "But I am not too busy to welcome a friend."

"I came partly in that capacity, and partly on business. I want to get some writings drawn up."

"I shall be very glad to draw them up for you, Mr. True, and I am confident that I can do it to your satisfaction."

"Of course you can, as you are now. I never heard of your having but one fault, and that a bad one. I hope you won't resent my plain speaking. I am a friend to you, and wish you well."

"I am not at all offended, Mr. True. I know what you mean; and with God's help I am trying to conquer my fault. If it is possible for a man once fallen into the depths to rise again, I shall."

"Then give me your hand, Mark Dunning. I bid you God speed, and if I can help you I will. Don't give up, and don't go back. There's only one safe course for such as you."

"I know it, and I intend to try that course. I have even given up smoking."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mr. True. "It is the best way, though it don't seem to injure some people. My mother couldn't tolerate tobacco smoke; so that kept me clear of it. As for liquor, I never cared anything about it, and since I've had a family of boys I don't touch it. There is no telling who can drink moderately and who can't."

"You are right," replied the lawyer. "Moderation is impossible for some people. If they taste of liquor, they must drink to drunkenness; and the quantity which produces this, is sometimes very small. In some conditions of mind and body, one glass of wine will madden me so that I have no control over myself. I have resolved again and again, that I would not be so weak; but the stimulus is too strong for my resolution. Now, I shall abstain altogether,— if God gives me the power to do so," he added, reverently.

"I have no doubt that you will," was the response. "God helps those who help themselves; and we must try to keep you busy. How about that writing? Can you do it in the morning?"

"Yes, sir, as early as you please. I am impatient to be at work again. I need to work."

"And work will come, never fear. I don't have much law business; but I shall be sure to come to you with everything in your line."

"Thank you, Mr. True. Your call has done me good, and I shall be the stronger for it."

Barton came from school, running in advance of Grace, and holding high a letter. It's from Arthur," he cried, seeing his mother by the window. "Directed to you, too," he added, as he entered the house. "Do read it loud. I want to hear every bit of it."

Mrs. Dunning cut the envelope, and four

letters appeared; one for each member of the family.

"There, that's why it took so many stamps. I thought it was a dreadful thick letter."

"I hoped to come home," Arthur wrote to his mother. "But one of the clerks is sick, and we are so busy I don't like to ask Mr. Clement to spare me. I wish I could be with you all the time.

"Don't work too hard, mother. Sometime I am going to do work enough for us both; and you shall be a lady."

Grace's letter was just what she needed; full of affection and encouragement; some advice in regard to her studies, and a bit of gossip about dress and fashions.

Barton, who was just learning to read writing, studied his epistle for a long time; and when at last he knew it all, laid it away carefully, without revealing its contents.

"Father's" was of the most importance;

written with much care, and containing earnest pleading. All that a dutiful and loving son could say to an erring father, seemed to be condensed upon this one sheet. The letter was tear-stained when Mark Dunning first looked at it, and still more stained when he laid it down after a careful perusal.

Supper, which had been prepared with especial reference to his taste, received small attention from him. He could not eat. Never had he been so moved by any appeal as by that of his son. He longed to clasp the boy in his arms and tell him all his hopes.

Grace was the only member of the family who seemed inclined to talk. Arthur's letter had made her so happy that she could not keep silence. In accordance with his suggestions, she was planning a new suit to be made from an old dress of her mother's which had been considered past further usefulness. A placid smile rested upon the mother's face,

and Barton looked as though suddenly elevated to some new dignity.

After supper Mr. Dunning returned to the room in which he had been writing, sat down by the table, placed a sheet of paper before him and then fell to musing of his past life. He thought of the home in which his eyes had first opened to the light; and of the parents whose love had made his early childhood like a glad, bright dream. He even seemed to inhale the fragrance of his mother's favorite flowers, and hear again the sweet tones of her voice.

Then he recalled the dark hours of her sickness, death, and burial, his father's grief, and the gloom which rested upon their home. Ere one short year had passed, the husband was laid beside his wife, and Mark Dunning was doubly orphaned. In his bereavement and destitution, a relation of his father's, and whose name he bore, offered him a home.

Gladly was this accepted; and quickly was his heart won by the affectionate kindness he received. "Uncle Mark," he called his friend; although their relationship warranted no such title. Once established in his new home, and accustomed to his new mode of life, the elastic spirits of boyhood rose above the despondency occasioned by his parents death. Pleasant years followed in which he repaid the generous expenditure made for him by such an improvement of his time and talents as reflected honor upon his friends.

Meanwhile, Uncle Mark was growing older; and a nephew thought it worth his while to ingratiate himself into favor. At this point large drops of perspiration stood upon the face of him for whom memory's magic hand retouched a fading picture. Again he cried, "God help me;" and again renewed his vows.

This nephew, older by many years than his

uncle's protege, was cool-headed and politic. Adapting himself to the habits and professions of those with whom he associated, he seemed sometimes to possess sterling principle; while he was in reality but playing a part.

When a boy, he had been no favorite with his upright relative; now as a man, he was able to overcome the prejudice against him, and in various ways make himself useful to him whose favor he sought to gain. Time had somewhat dimmed the mental vision of one who, in his prime was rarely deceived in his estimate of character; and taking advantage of this, his nephew forwarded his own plans, with small fear of detection.

At this time, Mark was away, prosecuting his studies, looking forward to their completion with some impatience, that he might return to the home where he had known so much of happiness, and where he had been ever welcome.

For Alfred Hanson he had little respect, and regretted to learn that he was at "The Oaks," as Mr. Dunning's place was called. The visitor, however, seemed rejoiced to meet him, according him the courtesy due to a host; and finding that his uncle's opinion of the man had changed, Mark allowed his own prejudice to be dissipated.

The two were often seen together; and there was talk of late sittings; when wine was brought from the cellar, and drinked freely. Soon the younger was conscious of something like coldness on the part of his benefactor, his place frequently being usurped by the new comer.

Directly after his return, he had opened an office in the village, and being a general favorite, received more encouragement than he could reasonably have expected. He went much into society, and his prospects were flattering.

Still Alfred Hanson remained, and people wondered, as he professed to have come there only upon a visit. But for this he offered a plausible excuse. He had business in that section of country, and his uncle desired him to make "The Oaks" his head quarters; and this story received confirmation from the fact that he was frequently absent for several days at a time.

Strange rumors, which no one could trace to their origin, were heard from time to time, in regard to the young lawyer's career, while in college and acquiring his profession. Before this, not a shadow had rested upon his fair fame, and many pronounced the reports untrue. Others inquired and wondered, perhaps recalling some trifling incident, which, by the aid of a powerful imagination, might be construed into a fault. Young Mark Dunning was dissipated, having more than once been known to drink to excess; and this rumor at

length reached the ears of him who would be most interested in it.

The proprietor of "The Oaks" had been a temperate man all his life, seldom indulging even in wine, unless with a friend; and he had taken care to impress upon his namesake the necessity of moderation. "Better never taste of wine, than once to be unmanned by it," he had often said. "If I mistake not, you, Mark, will need to be particularly on your guard."

Mindful of this counsel and caution, the young man had been extremely guarded, often making himself singular, by his extreme notions. Twice, while in college, he had to his great mortification, yielded to the influence of his companions, for which he paid the penalty in a confused brain, and aching head.

This decided him; and thenceforth he allowed himself no indulgence in stimulants, unless what he considered a proper regard for

politeness demanded it. Even then, while others drained their glasses, he hardly diminished the contents of his.

Alfred Hanson made himself aware of these scruples, and determined to overcome them. Since to give a detailed account of how this was accomplished, would occupy more space than I can devote to this part of my story ; it is sufficient to say that it was done under the guise of friendship, and by such means as were most likely to succeed.

Mrs. Hanson, sister of Mr. Dunning, joined her son, when he had been domesticated with his uncle about six months, and from that time, Mark seldom saw his old friend, except in the presence of a third person. Previous to this, he had been able to do so, during the nephew's absence ; but everything was so changed, that these interviews were far from pleasant.

For years Mr. Dunning had pleased himself

with the anticipation that when Mark had completed his studies, he would bring a young bride to enliven their home; and the object of his choice, Grace Barnes, was the old man's especial favorite. "Just as soon as you are through with study, we must have a wedding, and a new house-keeper," he said, only a few weeks before Alfred Hanson had appeared. "Mrs. Dean will be glad to resign her position, and we will pension her off."

Now, nothing was said of wedding or housekeeper; and Mark felt too keenly the estrangement between his benefactor and himself, to introduce a subject which might seem like pushing his own interests. If there could have been a frank, confidential interchange of thoughts and feelings, this estrangement might have been healed; but one party considering his kindness outraged, while the other was too proud and too much grieved to seek a reconciliation, this was not

effected. Every day which passed made this more difficult; and after Mrs. Hanson's arrival, it would have been nearly impossible.

She was very unlike her brother; so much so that in earlier years he had chosen to make provision for her and her family at a distance, rather than have her an inmate of his home. Now, in his dotage, he welcomed her, and she, having earned wisdom by experience, knew how to humor his whims and make herself necessary to his comfort.

Mark she treated with such deprecating condescension, that in the home where his wishes and happiness had been so long considered, he felt himself almost an intruder. True, the housekeeper and other servants still consulted him, yet they were seldom permitted to carry out his wishes.

Mrs. Dean rebelled against this new order of things. "If Mr. Dunning was what he used to be, I'd go to him and that woman, or I

should leave the house," she said to Mark. "But the old gentleman is failing, and I shall stay by him till I'm sent away."

"I hope you will," was the reply. "I wish I could make your position more pleasant, but I see no way that I can. Home seems very different to me from what it has before, and Uncle Mark has changed so much ——"

"I see that," interrupted the housekeeper. "Things are going wrong and the less you have to do with that Alfred, as his uncle calls him, the better it will be for you. He is no friend to you. You must let me speak the truth for the sake of old times, when you sat in my lap and told me all your troubles."

"Do speak the truth and the whole truth to me," said Mark.

"Well, then I will. I'm afraid you drink wine with that man;" and the speaker watched her companion to see how this would be received.

"I have sometimes. He urges it upon me and it seems a little more social."

"You had better not have it urged upon you again," said Mrs. Dean. "The old gentleman never liked much drinking, and he is sure to hear of all you do in that way. Take my advice and never drink wine again with Alfred Hanson."

"I *will* take it," replied the young man. "I have been a fool for being influenced by him when I never more than half trusted him."

"Has the old gentleman made his will?"

Mark surprised at this question asked so suddenly, said without thought, "He told me that he made his will several years ago."

"I am glad to know that. Alfred Hanson would like his uncle's property and will try to get it."

Mark Dunning had thought of this before; yet having no claims upon the man who had

thus far befriended him, he could only wait the issue. From this interview with Mrs. Dean, he went to visit Grace Barnes and was there somewhat enlightened in regard to the various reports concerning himself.

"Of course I know they are not true," added the young girl. "But your uncle may be prejudiced by them. He has changed very much within the past year. The last time I saw him he talked constantly of his nephew."

"O Grace, darling, you wont turn from me," exclaimed Mark, a sudden fear taking possession of his heart.

"Never!" she answered, looking up to him with an expression of the utmost confidence.

"Bless you for the assurance," and at that moment, he cared little for the opinion of others, so long as he was loved by one so dear.

He decided, however, to improve the first opportunity to come to some understanding with his uncle; and full of this thought at their next meeting alone, he said, "I am anxious to have a long, confidential talk with you, Uncle Mark."

These words were no sooner spoken, than Mrs. Hanson glided into the room, and adroitly engaged her brother's attention. She wished to discuss some family matters.

Angry at the intrusion, Mark returned to his office, feeling keenly his own isolated position. It was not the old man's wealth he coveted; but the thought of losing the love and confidence which had been his from boyhood, almost overpowered him. His education was completed, and he had been admitted to the bar under favorable circumstances. Surely, he could provide for himself.

If he had only been more firm to resist temptation, — Ah! here was his weakness.

The insinuating smile and professed friendship of one whom he instinctively doubted, had lured him to sinful indulgence.

In his conversation with Grace Barnes, he did not acknowledge that, under much of falsehood reported concerning him, there was a slight foundation of truth; but, after reflecting, he hastened to do so, telling her wherein he had failed. She accepted all which he said, honoring and loving him the more for his frankness, while never doubting that he was worthy her fondest trust.

Alfred Hanson, returning from a short absence, found himself on an entirely different footing with the young lawyer. In vain were all his blandishments. Cigars, wine, and conversation were alike, declined.

"What has come over you?" asked the tempter. "I shall leave The Oaks, if you keep this up."

An angry reply was about to be given, when

better thoughts prevailed; and with a few unmeaning words, Mark Dunning turned away.

At this time, Mrs. Hanson was assiduously cultivating the acquaintance of Mrs. Barnes and her daughter, lavishing caresses upon Grace, and winning the mother's heart by well timed flatteries. They were often invited to "The Oaks," but strangely enough, these invitations were given for days when it was known that Mark would be absent. Mr. Hanson then improved the opportunity to display his gallantry and consideration, some times quite burdening the object of his attentions.

Mrs. Barnes was really pleased with him, and sometimes endeavored to combat what she considered an unwarranted prejudice, on the part of her daughter.

Before any explanation had taken place between the old gentleman and his namesake,

he was stricken down with paralysis. Then, as was natural, his sister watched beside him, Mark never seeing him alone. The physician said there was no hope of his recovery, although he might live for months.

Mrs. Dean, still longing to set matters right, waited for an opportunity to do so. "That woman and her son are looking to the property," she said to herself, seeking in vain for means to counteract their schemes. At length she told Mark if he would stay about the house, she would manage that he should have an interview with his uncle. "The old woman is going out, and I heard Alfred say that he had some business to attend to. But don't let them know you are anywhere round. If you do they won't stir a step."

The ruse succeeded. The old man smiled and extended the hand over which he had yet some control, as Mark entered his room. This poor, emaciated hand was bathed in

tears. Pride gave way and gratitude found voice. Never, even in his boyhood, when receiving some unexpected pleasure or renewed token of interest on the part of his benefactor, did Mark Dunning express more of grateful affection.

"Something has come between us, dear uncle, and I have been very unhappy," he said. "But I have not disgraced you. I could not do that."

"But,— Mark,— my — boy,— they — said ——"

"I know what has been said," interrupted Mark, anxious to prevent this labored speaking.

Nearly an hour they passed together, during which time the younger man talked almost constantly; not always comprehended, as he saw with pain; yet still so far reinstated in favor that a hand was laid upon his head in blessing. "You trust me now, dear uncle," he said.

"Yes, — my — dear — boy. Stay — with me. I meant — to — do — you — justice,— and — provide — for — you."

"No matter about that. You have done everything for me already. I care for your love and confidence; not for your wealth."

Mr. Dunning was about to reply, when his nephew came in and said, with apparent surprise, "You, here? I expected to find Mrs. Dean. She said she would sit with uncle, while mother and myself were out; and I am very sorry you have been troubled. I came past your office a few minutes ago and some one waiting there, asked if you had gone out of town. I will take your place."

"But I choose to remain where I am," answered Mark. "My business is of comparatively small consequence."

"Stay," whispered the invalid, with a gratified smile.

Alfred Hanson winced under this; and

something of his true nature gleamed from the dark eyes which were bent full upon his rival as he said, "Your presence has excited uncle already, and for his sake, I must ask you to leave the room."

"Not unless he desires it," was the reply.

"Stay," again said the old man, in a husky voice, and at that moment he seemed to read the character of those before him.

His brow contracted, his lips worked convulsively, and he looked at Mark as though seeking assistance in the utterance of thoughts, which agitated him.

Dr. Graves entered the room, as was his wont, without giving notice of his approach. "I am glad to see you here, Mark," he said. "You can afford to neglect business, for the sake of your old friend."

"I am glad to do so. Uncle Mark has been a father to me; and I fully appreciate all his kindness. If I have seemed wanting in

attention to him, it has been through no fault of mine."

"I am glad to hear that. I thought all the time, that your heart was in the right place. You used to be a good nurse, and you must try your skill again. You like to have Mark with you," added the doctor, turning to his patient.

A closer clasping of the strong, supple hand, which the invalid still held in his own, answered this. A moment after, however, the hand was released, and some incoherent words gasped forth. "Bring — box — drawer — key — " were all which could be understood.

"Something is wanted," said Dr. Graves.

"Do you wish me to bring your ebony box?" asked Mark.

"Bring it, — Key."

"I know where you have always kept the key. Doctor, will you remain here until I come back?"

"Certainly," was the reply, and the physician sat where he could watch the countenance of his friend. "There is something you wish to say."

"Yes," gasped the old man.

"Then take time. Don't feel in a hurry. Wait till Mark comes back. He will understand you better than I can," said the doctor.

Alfred Hanson did not move. His face paled and flushed with emotion; yet there he stood, not far from the bed; although he would gladly have followed Mark, could he have done so without creating suspicion of his motives.

Short time had he for consideration. The box was brought. The invalid extended his half-palsied hand, raised his head slightly from the pillow, and then fell back, as a stream of blood flowed from his mouth.

"Too late!" exclaimed Dr. Graves. "Whatever he would have said, must now remain forever unsaid, in this world."

One single look of consciousness was given, and before the family could be summoned, the last struggle was over. In the presence of witnesses, Mark Dunning returned the ebony box to its accustomed place; and then, as others crowded around, to perform the last sad offices, he went away by himself, where he could indulge his grief without restraint.

There was some pretence of consulting him in regard to the funeral obsequies, while in reality, Mrs. Hanson and her son took the matter into their own hands. Friends were invited, and nothing was wanting of outward respect for him who had passed away.

Before the relatives separated, the last will and testament of the deceased was read, this instrument bearing date scarcely six months previous. By its conditions, Alfred Hanson came into possession of The Oaks, with a large part of his uncle's remaining property. Mark Dunning was to receive a legacy of One

Thousand Dollars, Mrs. Dean the same,. and several others, smaller sums.

Most of those present were astonished at the disposition of this property, and not a few believed that the old gentleman had been unduly influenced. Of this, they were quite certain, when in the examination of the papers, another will, drawn up some years previous, was found, which made Mark Dunning residuary legatee and proprietor of The Oaks. The last executed will was in the ebony box, which the deceased had desired to be brought to him.

To say that the young lawyer was indifferent to the change in his prospects, would not be true; yet, making no complaint, he left his old quarters, and established himself elsewhere. Alfred Hanson hoped he would leave the village; but this he did not seem inclined to do.

In process of time, the estate was settled,

the legacies paid, and The Oaks formally transferred to their new owner, who spared no effort to render himself popular with his townsmen. He was affable, courteous, and obliging. If he did not entertain company as his hospitality prompted, it was from respect to his deceased uncle; and all who came were welcomed. His mother had never appeared to such advantage, as when, after the departure of Mrs. Dean, she assumed the entire management of the household.

Grace Barnes was still a favorite; and, at length, ignoring the fact of her engagement, while presuming upon his wealth and position, Alfred Hanson asked her to share his home. Her answer was what might have been expected, but the suitor knowing how much could sometimes be accomplished by perseverance and adroit management, ventured a remark reflecting upon his rival. Quick to take offence at this, the young girl replied in

a way which compelled him to apologize in such manner that she could not but accord him pardon. "I pray you still to consider me your friend," he said at parting. "If I have offended, it has been because of my great disappointment in the denial of my fondest hopes."

After this Grace Barnes warned her lover against Alfred Hanson, as one who would be sure to injure him if possible; and the young man could not long remain in ignorance of the true state of affairs.

"You might be mistress of The Oaks even now," he said somewhat bitterly.

"I hope I shall be mistress when you are master," she replied, smiling. "Until then I am content to dwell in a cottage."

And she *did* dwell in a cottage; the same so long occupied by her mother, for two years after Mark Dunning called her wife. There her first born child was laid in her arms, and

the years were happy; so happy that their memory lingered through all the darker ones which followed. Then a larger house was purchased and still they prospered; until in an evil hour the husband and father yielded to the fascinations of the wine cup.

Less strong and less mindful to resist temptation than he had been before, foolishly indulging with Alfred Hanson, he had not considered it necessary that he should abstain entirely from stimulants. For years he drank only with others; but there came a time when this occasional indulgence did not satisfy the cravings of his appetite, and he had fallen through all the successive stages of degradation, until guant poverty had entered his dwelling while the finger of scorn pointed at him as a drunkard. A fearful retrospect for one who sat alone communing with his own heart, and imploring strength from above. A dark record of desecrated talents and wasted time.

What wonder that Mark Dunning clasped his hands in agony and prayed to forget!

CHAPTER III.

Fearful and long the strife,
When death makes war with life :
The prize a human soul,
Each struggles to control.

ARTHUR DUNNING held his father's letter for a moment, hesitating to open it, lest his worst fears should be confirmed. To his surprise, however, it contained but these words :

MY DEAR BOY :

I am resolved, God helping me, never to taste another drop of intoxicating liquor. Pray for me that I may have all needed strength.

Your affectionate father,

MARK DUNNING.

This was better than the boy had dared to hope; all he could have desired; and instantly his heart uttered the prayer which God alone could hear. He was so happy that nothing seemed hard. He could work or study without thought of fatigue; and his great joy was so apparent, that one of the clerks said, "I should think you had come into possession of a fortune, Dunning."

"I have," was the quick reply.

"How much, all told?"

"I don't know. It is not yet appraised. When it is, I will let you know."

"All right. We'll have a jubilee, when the figures are announced. I wish a fortune would come to me, if it would improve my looks as much as it has yours. I declare, Dunning, you *are* a handsome fellow. Don't be too proud, though; for pride must have a fall."

Little cared Arthur for all this. He was

thinking what their home might be, and praying, oh, so earnestly that their hopes might not be again dashed to the ground.

His prayers ascended with those of others. All day had Mark Dunning written, his resolve growing stronger, and his hand steadier, with each stroke of the pen. The friend who came early in the morning had hardly gone, when another presented himself; and so on through the day, until night.

"You have worked too steady," said his wife, threading her fingers through his hair.

"I think not," he replied, with a smile. "I have worked no more steadily than you, and certainly, there is need. I am impatient of idleness. I should be glad to have no waking hour unemployed."

At the same time this subject was being discussed, some men, gathered in one of the village stores, were talking of the lawyer, expressing their opinion in regard to him, and even venturing to predict his future course.

"I've seen him to-day, and I can tell you he's in earnest, this time," said one. "He'll do what he says."

"How do you know that?" was asked, sharply.

"Recause he has commenced right. He depends upon God, and not upon his own strength. If you could hear him talk as I have, you would have faith in him."

"Where did you see him?" asked a grave looking man.

"At home," was replied. "I went there to get some writing done. I thought if he was trying to reform, I would give him a lift, and I'm glad I did. It wouldn't be strange if he should make people open their eyes a little, at the next term of court."

"You don't say anybody would trust him with a case!"

"We can tell better about that when the time comes. We all know Mark Dunning is a

good judge of law, and can use his tongue to advantage."

"That's true," was the response from more than one. "He's the smartest lawyer in the county. There aint one could begin with him, if he'd let drink alone."

"Who is so mighty smart?" asked a new comer.

"Ah! good evening, Mr. Giles. We were speaking of Mark Dunning," was the reply.

"Well, what of him? I wouldn't waste much breath on that poor fellow. It aint much more than a week since he had a spree, went back to the old place and kicked up a row generally. He's a miserable sot to make the best of him."

"You may be mistaken, Mr. Giles," said one, and the tone implied more than the words.

"I hope I am; but I have seen too much of him to have any confidence in him."

"It would go hard with Giles in his land case, if Mark *should* keep sober," remarked a bystander, when the last speaker was well beyond hearing.

"How so?" asked another.

"Why, you see Mark drew up the papers between old Giles and his wife, and if they aint produced there'll be trouble. The land belonged to the old woman; the Dunn place, you know, and she sold it to Conant. Now, Tom says she couldn't give a deed of it that was worth anything; so he has commenced a suit for the recovery of the land."

Tom Giles had heard enough to make him somewhat anxious; and before leaving the village he spoke to several men in regard to Mark Dunning; and much to his surprise, nearly all expressed the belief that the lawyer would yet redeem himself. Dr. Graves had taken care to give publicity to his opinion; and others were willing to spread the good news.

Alfred Hanson had doubts which he expressed with great show of regret for the necessity of so doing. "There is little hope for one who has fallen so low," he said. "I wish he might reform. No one would rejoice more sincerely than myself. He bears the name of a good man."

Only a month before the next session of court, and as this was the county town, the cases to be tried were already under consideration. Giles counted on an easy victory; if, indeed, Mrs. Conant should attempt any defence. Three lawyers were retained on his side, and he had been confident of success. But to use his own expression, when speaking to one of his counsel, "things began to look squally."

"In some way Mark Dunning must be kept back;" and then he added a remark in a tone which was scarcely audible.

"Perhaps that might be managed if worst

comes to worst," was the reply. "It would be rather too bad, though. I always liked Dunning. He was ready to give others a fair chance, and it would be hard to put him down so, if he is trying to get up."

"All things are fair in law," said Giles with a wicked leer. "This must be done some way. I'm bound to have that land, and Mark Dunning shan't stand in my way."

Did a bird of the air whisper this, or did Dr. Graves so read the signs of the times that he could predict what would be?

For four weeks, each day had been a holiday in Mark Dunning's family. They rose in the morning with jubilant hearts and lay down to rest at night thankful and happy. During this time Arthur spent one Sabbath at home, and then the circle complete, they knelt together, while the husband and father implored God's blessing upon each and all. He prayed also for strength and wisdom, that

in the hour of temptation he might not fall. Angels must have rejoiced at sight of this kneeling group, and shouted the glad tidings that one more wanderer had returned to the Master's fold.

"O, father, I am perfectly happy," exclaimed Arthur. "I know everything will go right now."

"I hope so, my son; but I am very weak. God grant you may never know, by experience, how weak. It is a fearful thing to be such a slave to appetite as I have been; and, even now, I tremble at the thought of once more mingling with men, and being exposed to temptation. I may fall, when I least expect it."

"Oh, no, father, that cannot be. Now that you know the danger —"

"I have always known it," interrupted Mr. Dunning. "Do you think I have been unmindful of my degradation? However much

my family have suffered, I have suffered infinitely more. I would rather die than drink again; and yet — yet — God only knows. O Arthur, never, never taste of wine. It is the first glass which works one's ruin, and it is so easy to refuse. It requires only a little decision and moral courage."

"You need have no fears for me," replied the boy. "Mother has talked to me about drinking, ever since I can remember; and before I left home, I promised her I would never taste any intoxicating liquor, or use any tobacco. I have kept that promise for a year, and I *shall* keep it to the end of my life."

"And Barton, how is it with you?"

"I do just as brother Arthur does," was the reply. "He tells me all about it, and I don't drink cider, because he said I better not."

Grace, who had been assisting her mother

in the household work, came in soon after this, and Barty, vacating his favorite seat, said, "You can sit in father's lap. I guess you ought to, because you're a girl, and so pretty," he added, looking up into his sister's face with an expression of such honest admiration, that it provoked a smile.

Grace accepted the proffered seat gladly, but she had no time to think of the compliment. In her coaxing way, she asked her father if he would do just what she wanted him to.

"I will try," he answered. "What is it you desire?"

"We all want you to go to church with us to-day," she replied, at the same time laying her hand over his mouth, that he might not speak without consideration. "You will, won't you, dear father? It will make us so happy, and I *know* it will do you good."

It was more than five years since Mark

Dunning had entered the house of God, or listened to a sermon. He intended to accompany his family to church; but was not ready to do so now. He wished to test the strength of his resolution, and, until more fully established in his new position, preferred the seclusion of home. His wife had not mentioned the subject of church going, although she had done what she could to put his wardrobe in a presentable condition, and was very anxious that they should worship once more together.

Grace waited for a reply, pleading, meanwhile, "Don't say no, father. Please go with us this morning."

"I should be glad to grant your request, my dear child," he said, at length. "But I believe I must wait until I have a new suit of clothes." Then, seeing the regret expressed by the countenances of his children, he added, "I am sorry not to gratify you. If my clothes were suitable, I really believe I would go."

"Will you go, if mother says you look nice enough?" asked Grace.

"Yes," he answered, decidedly.

Mother was called, and after some discussion, it was decided that it would be best to go. Not elegantly dressed was any member of this family; but when once the services commenced, they forgot the worshipping assembly, and thought only of the good news of great joy, which had been vouchsafed to man.

The clergyman had chosen for his theme the parable of "The Prodigal Son," and from it he deduced the strongest proofs of God's infinite mercy. "Repent and return; so shall you be saved," said the good man. "As he loveth most to whom most is forgiven, let no one despair of happiness.

"God giveth his grace gladly, giveth his strength freely, and saves us not only from the punishment of our sins, but from our sins

themselves. Looking to him for aid, we can resist temptation, and strong in the power of his might, we can come off conqueror, through him who loveth us."

These words, so full of consolation to one struggling to rise above the allurements of evil, were like a direct message from God, to Mark Dunning. He no longer doubted or feared. He *could*, he *would* prevail. It seemed so easy then. Would it ever again seem difficult?"

Service over, his children stopped for Sabbath School, while he and his wife walked slowly homeward; not, however, until many had grasped his hand, and expressed pleasure at seeing him.

Alfred Hanson attended church that morning, and was, perhaps, with the exception of Tom Giles, the only member of the congregation who regretted the presence of his cousin, as he was sometimes pleased to call the

lawyer. It looked too much like radical reform; yet he was careful to say in a loud tone, that the sermon had been well chosen, and he hoped it would have its legitimate effect. "If one could be reclaimed, Mr. Ware would feel repaid for the labor bestowed upon his sermon."

Mark Dunning read the parable, and on bended knees, prayed that he might be allowed to serve in his Father's house.

"I am thankful that I heard that sermon," he said to his wife. "If Mr. Ware had prepared it expressly for me, it could not have been more appropriate."

"Shall you go this afternoon?"

"Yes, Grace, I shall. It would be a great self-denial to remain away. It was not so hard to meet the people as I thought it would be. This morning it seemed impossible."

Everything was pleasant; and the day proved to be one of greater happiness than

Arthur had anticipated. In the evening, when speaking of his own prospects, he expressed so much satisfaction that his father asked him if he preferred work to study.

"No, sir," was the quick reply. "But I manage to study some every day, and what I learn without a teacher I shall be sure to remember. I think I am getting along very well with Latin."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mr. Dunning. "But don't overtax yourself. I hope to see you in school again before next year at this time. You would like that."

"Yes, sir, if the rest could have what they need."

"They *can* have it. They *shall* have it. I am beginning life anew, and — and — "

Oh, how weak he was! Only to think of the temptations to which he might be exposed, made him tremble. He had fallen so many times. But his family would not let

him think of this. Divining his thoughts, they spoke so hopefully that he caught something of their spirit.

Early dawn saw Arthur on his way back to labor and duty. The whole family had breakfasted with him, and he left them with many a lingering look at the humble cottage.

"A long day before us," said Mark Dunning as he turned back into the house after watching his boy until quite out of sight. "I think a little exercise would do me good," and for half an hour he made vigorous use of woodsaw and ax.

It was necessary that some groceries should be purchased for the family. Mrs. Dunning had attended to this for several years; partly because she was less lavish in expenditure than her husband, and partly because she would give him no excuse for entering any place where he could obtain intoxicating drink. She had intended sending Arthur to

the grocery Saturday evening; but he was too late for this.

"What is it?" asked Mark Dunning, observing the perplexed look of his wife as he entered the kitchen.

"We shall need some coffee and flour to-day," she answered, smiling.

"Well, there is money enough to pay for them, is there not?"

"Yes, money enough to pay for them twice over, if we could only get them here."

"That is easily done. I will go over to Stone's and order them as soon as it is time for the store to be open. You won't be afraid to trust me."

One glance in his face and the reply was quickly made. "No, I am not afraid to trust you."

"Is there nothing else wanted?" he asked.

"Nothing else which we *must* have."

"How is it about the sugar bucket, tea

caddy, and various other pantry conveniences?"

"In tolerable condition, for the present. With coffee and flour, I shall manage to provide table comforts, for several days to come."

Just then, it seemed to her that nothing was needed, now that her husband's voice had the old ring.

"Well, then, coffee and flour it is," he said. "I shall be back soon."

Down the village street he walked, past his former lounging places, without so much as a glance at them. The landlord of the hotel, who was out early upon business, met him with a hearty good morning.

"Good morning, sir," was the reply.

"Rather a sharp morning," the landlord continued. "Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you. I have no time to stop."

"It's true. That man is in earnest, and I'm glad of it, if I *do* lose a customer. If I

was in Mark Dunning's place, I'd show folks how things are done, and I shouldn't wonder if that's just what he means to do."

Thus soliloquised the landlord; quite sure that his conclusions were correct, when he saw the lawyer enter the store of Mr. Stone.

As the merchant was at leisure, there was an opportunity for conversation. "I saw you at church," he remarked.

"Yes, I was out all day, and liked your minister very much," was the reply.

"Was it the first time you have heard him?"

"The first time I have heard him preach. I don't intend, however, that it shall be the last."

"I hope not," replied the merchant. "His sermons do me so much good, that I want everybody else to hear them. By Saturday night, I begin to feel that life is pretty up hill work; but Mr. Ware makes me see what a

true, strong friend I have in our dear elder brother, so that I am ready to commence another week with good heart."

"He made us see this friend, yesterday. The sermon in the morning was just what I needed to hear."

Mr. Stone longed to say more, and after a little hesitation, he exclaimed, "Mark Dunning, I want to tell you how glad and thankful I am that you are trying to reform. I don't know but you'll be offended at my speaking of it."

"Indeed I am not," was the reply. "I am glad you have spoken. I need all the help I can get, and all the prayers, too. I have a hard battle to fight; and God only knows if I shall win."

"God knows you *will* win, if you trust him for grace and strength," said Mr. Stone. "We all need his aid, to keep us in the right way."

"Some, more than others, and I most of all."

"Hardly that, my friend. There are many worldly considerations which must have a strong influence over you. I used to think you were ambitious, and thought that might prove your besetting sin."

"I *was* ambitious," responded Mark Dunning. "I fancied I might win the breath of popular applause, and I fully intended to make myself worthy of respect."

"You may do all that now," said his friend. "And what is better, you may win the approval of God."

"I hope and pray that I shall. Remember me in your prayers, Mr. Stone."

"I will," returned the Christian merchant. "I *did* remember you in my prayers, last evening. And now, what can I do for you in my line, this morning?"

Several pounds of coffee and a barrel of flour were bought.

"Is that all, Mr. Dunning?"

"Yes," and the purchaser took out his pocket-book, to pay for the articles.

"If not perfectly convenient for you to spare the money this morning, I will charge them, and whatever else you may wish," said Mr. Stone.

"Thank you," was the really grateful reply. "It is not necessary for me to take advantage of your kindness now, but I may be glad to do so at some other time. Good morning."

People looked from their windows to see Mark Dunning, as he passed; and one old man, who had known and loved him from boyhood, rapped to call his attention, and then beckoned him into the house.

"Good morning, Uncle John," said the younger man, as he entered a pleasant room, where sat his old friend.

"Good morning, Mark. I want you to come close to me, so I may get a look at you.

I saw you yesterday, and I prayed for you. I've heard about you, too, and I want to tell you how glad I am you are beginning to prosper again. I won't keep you any longer, for I know you was hurrying home when I called you; but God bless you, Mark. God bless you. Come in and see me sometimes."

"Yes, Uncle John. Thank you for your prayers and good wishes."

Mrs. Dunning was feeling a little anxious in regard to her husband; but the first glimpse she caught of him reassured her. He was walking rapidly and she turned to her work.

"My morning's walk has done me good," he said. "I haven't felt so well for the last ten years. Do you suppose we can grow young again, Grace?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the happy wife. "I am drinking of the fabled elixir of youth."

"I believe you, my dear, and I — well, we shall see."

If the other lawyers of the village had as much business as came to Mark Dunning that week, they could not reasonably complain. It seemed as though people bought and sold for the purpose of giving him employment. Mrs. Conant visited him more for the pleasure of so doing, than because her business demanded it.

By this time Tom Giles was on the alert; scheming with base cunning to accomplish his ends. "I don't believe Dunning's good fit will last three weeks longer," he said to his lawyer.

"I don't know about that," was the reply. "Everything looks fair on his side. He seldom goes out of the house, and if reports are true he has as much writing as he can do. He'll give the rest of us a run if he keeps on."

"He won't keep on. He's tried it before a good many times, and always gone back. If he had a glass of wine before him it would settle his case quick. Why don't you invite him to come in some evening and talk the matter over. I could manage it if I was in your place."

"Do you mean that you would manage to get him to drink a glass of liquor, Mr. Giles?"

"I mean that I would give him a *chance* to drink if he wants to," was the heartless reply. "I don't want him interfering with my business."

"But Mrs. Conant has a right to defend the suit you have brought against her."

"I suppose she has, and I've a right to the case if I can get it. Are you going to help me?"

"In any fair way," replied the lawyer.

"Muttering to himself Tom Giles left the

office, and the next day invited a large number of the people to visit at his house Christmas evening. Among those invited were Mr. Dunning and wife.

"Tom has an ax to grind, as Uncle Mark used to say; and as I have no fancy for turning the stone I think we will stay at home," remarked the lawyer.

"That will be the best way," replied his wife. "But don't let us do him injustice by suspecting his motives."

"Spoken like yourself, Grace; and we will give him the benefit of the doubt while we keep at a safe distance."

Mr. Giles was a wealthy farmer, who, to his other faults never added a want of hospitality; but this Christmas feast was intended to eclipse any previous entertainment. There was wine for those who wished it; with no lack of other drinks, which cheer, but not inebriate. The host had the pleasure of

knowing that his expenditure was appreciated; yet he was far from being satisfied. The man whose presence he most desired had politely excused himself in a way which left no opportunity for remonstrance.

At home, with his family, Mark Dunning found happiness where was no danger. Not having been in the way of temptation, he could hardly calculate his powers of resistance; yet often his spirits flagged, and his system craved the accustomed stimulant. Often a terrible thirst seemed consuming him; while a mad fever raged in his veins; but through all he cried, "God help me," and thus far his prayer had been answered.

He found himself, too, surrounded with friends who gave him the substantial sympathy he needed. Dr. Graves advised him from time to time in regard to the diet and regimen best calculated to restore a healthy tone to stomach and brain: and he had suffered

less than many under similar circumstances. It was long since he had known the pleasure of bestowing a gift upon any one; but this Christmas each member of his family received some token of his affectionate interest. These of course could not be expensive, but they were such as would contribute to comfort or improvement. Arthur's present, which had been forwarded to him by stage, was a book he had long desired to possess; and no gift could have been more welcome.

Time sped on until the day for the opening of court, whon Mark Dunning took his place with other members of the bar by whom he was cordially greeted. Knowing that his whole future depended upon the result of this session, he was resolved to do his best. Dissipation had not given him the bloated face and figure which mark so many of its victims; and no one would have suspected the depths into which he had fallen. Tom Giles

had not withdrawn his case, although every one said he was sure to be beaten. Yet he, with the obstinacy which characterized him, and still hoping that something would turn up in his favor, refused to entertain the idea of defeat. He watched Mark Dunning closely; calculating the strength and resolution so legibly written on the pale face. For the first time this unjust claimant feared for the result of his suit; and wondered if he could compromise the matter without loss to himself. With Mrs. Conant alone he might have succeeded; but it was too late to apply to her now. He could manage that the trial be postponed to another term; but this did not suit his plans. He wanted the Dunn lot and intended to have it at some price before another spring. It was near the village and a good location for a house.

"I'll wait awhile and see how things go," he said to himself. "Dunning will be invited

to the hotel with the other lawyers, and then there will be a chance for him."

The first week passed and nothing had occurred in his favor. His council was not disposed to aid him in the way he had suggested. The second week one of the officers of the court invited some friends to spend the evening with him in his room at the hotel. Of course Mark Dunning was included; his social qualities having formerly rendered him a valuable accession to any company.

He knew perfectly well the programme of the evening. There would be cards and wine; some intelligent conversation with many jokes and humorous stories. Should he go? Once he would not have hesitated.

It was long since he had stood an equal among his professional brethren; and the "Don't fail to come, Dunning," which supplemented the invitation was very grateful to

him. He might go yet not taste of wine; and for the moment he thought he could do this. He was anxious to reinstate himself in the good opinion of people outside his own town, and if he should publicly refuse to drink, it might be of great advantage to him.

Thus he reasoned, walking slowly, his eyes fixed upon the ground, thinking so intently that he started with some surprise when the doctor addressed him.

"Glad to see you," said his old friend. "Glad to see you. I suppose you are enjoying life just now."

"Yes, sir, very well," was the reply; but the tone in which this was said lacked heartiness.

"What is it, Mark? Something troubles you. Is anything wrong?"

"No, sir," and now the response was made with decision. "I was only considering where it is best to spend the evening."

"Away from temptation," said the doctor, instantly.

"You are right," was the exclamation which greeted this. "The question is settled, and Lawrence must miss me from his party. I am glad I met you. Thank you for your advice."

"I expected Dunning here this evening," said Sheriff Lawrence after the arrival of others whom he had invited. "I am sorry he disappointed me. It has been so long since he met with us I thought he would like to come, and I, for one, wanted to show him that I could forget the past. He is looking well, now."

"Yes," replied another. "With the exception of being rather pale, he looks as well as ever. I'm glad to see him back in his old place; though he'll give the rest of us a try if he sticks to his text."

"What is his text?"

"Total abstinence," was the reply.

"Has he come to that?" asked the sheriff. "That is going rather too far for me. I believe in temperance; but I *do* enjoy a glass of wine occasionally with my friends."

"We all know that, Lawrence; and here followed a series of jokes which might have been brilliant when uttered, without being worthy of repetition.

There were cards; there was wine; and each one present drained his glass. Had Mark Dunning made one of the party, his fall would have been certain. If others could drink moderately, he could not. His breath came thick and fast as he realized this; and saw with clear vision how near he had stood to the brink of a precipice.

"There would have been no more hope for you had you gone to the hotel," said his wife. "This evening would have sealed your fate."

"I hope it *has* sealed it," was the reply.

"But it's terrible to shut one's self out from society because too weak to resist evil. I am not sure that I am worth saving after all," he added, with a sickly smile.

"But I am sure," whispered she who looked up into his face with such sweet confidence that he called her his good angel. "You must not slander my husband. I have faith in him."

"Then I will never despair again," he answered. "Home shall be my refuge."

The next day, when asked why he had not spent the previous evening at the hotel, he replied frankly, that he could not trust himself to do so. "You can drink moderately," he said to the sheriff. "I drink immoderately if I drink at all, and I supposed you would furnish wine for your guests."

"I did; but I would not have urged you to drink. You could have done as you pleased."

"For all that it would have been a hard place for one like me."

"Then I am glad you did not come," responded Mr. Lawrence. "I wish to see you prosper and fill the position for which you are fitted. If there is but one road to success for you, I bid you God speed in that."

Yet it *did* seem to the speaker that a man might set bounds to his indulgence, without foregoing entirely the pleasures of the social glass. He advocated this for many years; but, alas for his theory, he died a drunkard.

The land case was called. Tom Giles' council made the most of the material in their possession; and everything looked fair to those who knew nothing beyond their statements.

Mark Dunning rose slowly, spoke for a few minutes, and then unfolded some papers which he proceeded to read. These papers had been drawn up by himself about sixteen years before; and were obtained from a relative of the late Mrs. Giles. Her avaricious

step son knew that such papers had once existed; but supposed them to have been lost or destroyed. It did seem so for a time, when the niece of Mrs. Giles to whom her personal property had been willed, declared she had made most diligent search without finding them. Mr. Dunning did not consider them absolutely essential to the interests of his client; as he believed he could produce such evidence and make such plea as would carry the jury; yet a few days before the case was to come on he went again to the house of Miss Dustin.

"Are you quite sure that every bag, box, bundle and trunk that was your aunt's has been examined," he asked.

"I *aint* quite sure," answered the niece after some hesitation. "I thought I had ransacked everything; but seems to me there was an old trunk brought here that I haint seen lately. It must be under the eaves, in

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the garret if anywhere. I'll go and look this very minute."

There was the trunk containing newspapers, scraps of books, rags, two or three tracts, a broken tumbler, some worn garments; and, buried beneath all, wrapped in several folds of cloth, a package tied with faded ribbon.

"There," exclaimed the woman rushing down stairs in great haste. "That's all I can find, except rags and rubbish. You can see what that is."

The papers were found at last, and when read in court, Mrs. Conant's claim to the land was substantiated beyond a doubt. Her lawyer, too, was once more brought into notice.

Alfred Hanson had listened with mingled feelings; half envying, half fearing the man he had wronged. That evening he heard his daughter say, "Grace Dunning wore a new

dress to school to-day; and she looked so pretty everybody praised her."

This was told to Walter; who replied, "I guess their father is getting rich. ~~Walter~~ Barty wears better clothes than he used to, and he had on some new boots to-day. I'm glad of it, too. He's just the best boy; and I'm almost glad he got the prize instead of me. There was a real hard question in our arithmetic lesson, yesterday; and he showed me about it, so I didn't miss. I like him."

"Who is it, you like?" asked Mrs. Hanson.

"Barty Dunning," was the reply.

"Dear me, those Dunnings! It does seem as though you children were bewitched with them. I wish they would leave town."

In his own room John Forbes was talking of the law suit, and complimenting Mark's appearance in the court room. "It's a fact that he never looked as well to me as he did to-day."

"He looks older than he ought to at his age," replied Mrs. Forbes.

"I don't know about that. He has changed a good deal in the last three or four weeks. How long is it since you saw him?"

"I saw him at church last Sabbath."

"But you must see him when he is talking to know how he really looks. Suppose we go over there this evening. The walking is good; and there is nothing to prevent."

Mrs. Forbes and Mrs. Dunning were cousins; and as they had maintained an intimate acquaintance through all their varying fortunes, they met cordially.

"We have come to congratulate you," said the visitor, before laying aside her cloak and hood. "I've enquired about you whenever there was an opportunity, and I've heard nothing but good."

"We have nothing but good here, now," replied the happy wife.

"And I am trying to be a good husband," added Mark. "I have been bad so long that to do good now, is quite a wonder."

"Well, it is never too late to mend," was the reply. "I've been looking for a change in you."

"And I have hoped for one. I have always hoped I should reform."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Forbes.

"Mean just what I say," answered his host, emphatically. "Do you suppose I was satisfied to live and die a drunkard? No, indeed, I was not; and I doubt if *any* one, who realizes what life is, ever reaches a point where he is *satisfied* to continue in drunkenness. I have seen plenty of men degraded almost to brutishness, who bewailed their fate, in agony, when sober. You don't understand this, friends, and I trust you never will. But I'll not hold forth on the subject. I am glad to

see you this evening; and I am sure that my wife is. As for the children, they are always glad to see Uncle John and Aunt Sarah."

Uncle John was a man of practical good sense, and a broad charity which led him to overlook faults in others, he would not have tolerated in himself. While many had condemned Mark Dunning without mercy, he pitied one whose fine organization made him all the more liable to excesses.

"You are through with Tom Giles, now, I expect," he remarked, laughing.

"I suppose so, although he looks dissatisfied with what I have done," was the reply. "He was disappointed."

"Yes, that is plain to be seen. Those papers were a surprise to him."

"They were to me in one way, when I received them a few days ago," said the lawyer. "Miss Dustin thought she had made thorough search for them before."

"And what if you had not found them?"

"I should have trusted to some evidence I could bring forward; and, most of all to a lawyer's wit. I should have argued the case to the best of my ability."

"Then I almost wish the papers had gone, clear. It would have been a great thing for you to gain the case by your wit, as you call it."

"Yes, it would. But I trust there will be opportunity for the display of my powers in future. I am not going back, now, if God's grace and a strong will can keep me in the right way."

It may seem strange to my readers that a father should speak so frankly of past misdoings before his children; but Mark Dunning chose to do this. Once, when his wife remonstrated with him, he replied to her, "They have seen me in my degradation and I wish them to know all its horror. Then, it is well for me to commit myself."

As usual, Mrs. Dunning wished to consult her cousin in regard to some matter of household interest; so they with the children remained in the kitchen while the gentlemen adjourned to the room which served as parlor, sitting-room and office.

"You are getting beyond my teaching, cousin Grace," said kind Mrs. Forbes.

"Oh, no," was the reply. "I have had a great deal to learn; but, even now, I know very little."

Barty stole his hand into his mother's, looking a negative to this last remark; while Grace said, "*We* think mother knows almost everything."

"So we think father does," added Barty. "We love him almost as well as we do mother. He is going to have Arthur come home and go to school next spring."

"Is that so?" asked the visitor.

"We hope to have him at home in the

spring, if we prosper," replied Mrs. Dunning, and everybody knew the full import of this last clause. If the father abstained from drinking, the son could again enter school.

Various matters were discussed between Mark Dunning and his friend; and after some time had passed the former said, "My great desire now, is to provide for Arthur's education."

"Then you don't intend to keep him with Mr. Clement," was the reply.

"Oh, no. It would be wrong for me to do that. He went there because it was necessary that somebody should earn money; and he has done very well. But it isn't the right place for him. Thanks to my wife's good management and the kindness of our friends, we are not much in debt; and as I have given up all my extravagant habits, I think we can take him home in the spring."

"I hope you can," said Mr. Forbes. "If

I can help you in any way, you know I am ready to do it."

"I have learned that by experience; and you may be sure that I am grateful. I have never thanked you for that last night's watching with me."

"And I never wish to have you. Let us forget there was such a night."

"It would not be best for me to forget it," responded the lawyer. "I need to remember it, with all its horrors. I have not spoken to Alfred Hanson since then. He seems to avoid me, passing by on the other side."

"I suppose you are not troubled at that."

"Not at all, although I am willing to speak with him. I know he has tried to injure me, but I hope to forgive him. He doesn't look like a very happy man with all his wealth. I wouldn't change places with him."

"No more would I. He professes to be a friend to you, Mark; told me some time ago

to provide your family with anything they needed, and charge it to his account."

"I'd starve before I'd receive help from him," exclaimed the lawyer in an excited tone. "How foolish I am," he added, directly after. "There is no reason why Alfred Hanson should help me. I am able to provide for my family and myself."

"Of course you are. I suppose you will open an office right away."

"I am not quite sure; but I rather think I shall wait until spring for that. It is better for me to be here at home, for the present. When I grow restless and feel the cravings of my old appetite, Grace knows how to calm me and set me right again. It will be soon enough for me to try my strength alone, when the spring opens. Until then, whoever wishes my services must come here."

"But wouldn't it be just as well for you to have a little more confidence in yourself, and

open an office this winter? You would get more business in the village. I mean you would have more writing to do."

"I suppose I should. My wife and I have talked that all over, and I guess she is in the right of it. If I should fall now, it would be the end of me."

"Daughter Grace," as her father called her, interrupted the conversation by bringing in some of Mrs. Conant's Lemon Pippins.

"Nice apples," said the visitor.

"Very nice," replied his host. "According to the old fashion, I ought to give you some cider with them."

"That used to be the orthodox drink, with apples, but I seldom use any."

"I never intend to taste any again."

"*Never*, Mark?"

"*Never*," was the reply. "Why, half a glass would drive me crazy. I haven't allowed myself to taste of vinegar, since that horrid night."

"I pity you, Mark," said his friend. "As I look at you, though I don't see how you can need the pity of anybody."

"Pray for me," replied Mark Dunning. "That is the best thing you can do. I must fight the battle with my appetite, alone. If, when I was twenty years old, I could have been made to believe what I now *know*, the record of my life would be very different. It saddens me to see so many of our young men going wrong. There are plenty who preach moderation; and everybody despises drunkenness; but total abstinence is unpopular. There must be a change in public sentiment, before we can hope to make young men what they should be."

"Why don't you deliver a temperance lecture, Mark? You would speak to the purpose, and draw a full house."

"I will wait a while for that; wait until I have proved myself longer."

'Well, perhaps you are right. But if you were ready to speak now, I could give you a good text. You remember Ashley Gray?"

"Very well. I attended school with him. Do you know anything of him?"

"I know that he committed suicide, last week."

"Then he must have been insane. Ashley Gray would never have done that, in the exercise of his reason."

"I suppose you know he has been dissipated for the last few years," remarked Mr. Forbes.

"I didn't know it had come to that," was the reply. "I knew he was a moderate drinker."

"He was; but went from bad to worse, until he became a perfect sot. He had an attack of delirium tremens, about a fortnight ago; and after that he was in a strange way, though nobody thought of his killing himself."

"Poor fellow!" said Mark Dunning. "And what becomes of his children?"

"I suppose they must take their chance. One thing is pretty sure. They can't be any worse off than they have been. Gray abused them shamefully."

"Then they can hardly mourn for him. I have never seen his wife, but I have heard that she is a superior woman."

"A broken-hearted woman."

"How many children did he leave?" asked his old schoolmate.

"Two, a boy and a girl. The boy found his father hanging dead, and cut him down, before calling assistance."

"That was wonderful fortitude for a boy. Poor Ashley! How much he must have suffered, before committing the desperate deed! I know something of it. I have seen the time when I was so wretched, I would have taken my own life, if I had not feared to meet my judge."

Ah! many a man, and woman, too, who is

the slave of an appetite for strong drink, would shorten the period of their bondage, but for the fear of retribution hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

Up from the depths, as year by year,
One presses on, the heights appear.

SPRING had come. Snow lingered only in the shadow of fences, or in valleys where the sun's rays had not yet penetrated. The trailing arbutis with its delicate blossoms, peeped through dry leaves and the mouse ear, known to botanist by a more pretentious name, spread wide its velvety leaves, and unfolded its chaliced flowers. Catkins adorned the willows; and each maple twig blushed at touch of the sun's warm rays; while a stray robin occasionally enlivened the air with its song.

The county town in which the scene of my

story is laid was in a state of unusual activity. A new mill was in process of erection, several dwelling houses were to be in readiness for tenants before autumn, and altogether this little world seemed to be moving somewhat rapidly. Business men who had been satisfied to count their gains by hundreds, hoped at no distant day to find these gains increased tenfold. A young physician sought his share of practice; and there was some talk of there being room for another lawyer.

The lawyer came; not from out of town; but from an unpretending cottage within its limits. "Mark Dunning." The old sign had been repainted, and appeared once more in the place it had occupied ten years before.

"That's settled now," said an old man, shading his eyes to get a better view of the name opposite. "I've been expecting Mark would come out again, and I'll go right over now and see him. I hope he'll get a fair share of business."

"No fear but he will," replied some one standing near. "He has had more to do the last two months than any other lawyer in town, out of the way as he was. He's a smart man. I always said that when he was doing his worst; and now there's a good prospect for him."

"Yes, he *is* smart. Just the man to be very good or very bad. I'll go over and give him a word of encouragement. I used to think a good deal of him."

"Come," said the lawyer without raising his eyes from the paper before him. "Ah, good morning, Mr. Stiles," he added, as the door opened, admitting a visitor. "Take a seat. I am glad to see you."

"I wanted to see you, Squire," was the somewhat hesitating reply.

"Anything I can do for you in my line?"

"I guess not. I aint much of a hand to go to law, and I'm getting too old to make bargains. I only came in as a friend."

"Better yet," was the response. "I am always glad to see my friends."

"I wanted to tell you how glad I am to see your sign up again, and I hope you'll prosper," said Mr. Stiles. "I couldn't say much more than that if I should stay and hinder you all day."

"Don't go yet, my friend. I am not very busy this morning, and if I was I could stop to talk with you. You seem like a link between me and Uncle Mark."

"Your Uncle Mark was a good man," replied the visitor seating himself again.

"Yes, sir, he was; and I intend to do honor to his name yet."

"I hope you will, and honor yourself," was said, emphatically. "I wish too, you would do something for the boys of our village. It makes me feel bad to have them spend so much time round the tavern. It's a bad place for them."

"Indeed, it is, Mr. Stiles." I have learned that by experience."

"Well, can't you do something about it, Mark?" asked the old man, in his earnestness forgetting his usual respectful manner. "There's my daughter got a nice boy, if he'd keep away from places where liquor is sold. Can't you talk to him? I wish you would. It seems as though I couldn't bear to have him a drunkard; and he will be if he goes on. Can't you do something to help me? I didn't think of saying anything about this when I came in, but seeing you here looking so strong and bright made me think you might do something for John."

"All right, Mr. Stiles. Come to me any time, when I can serve you. I will endeavor to see John, and talk with him."

After the visitor left, Mark Dunning dipped his pen, then leaned back in his chair and mused, until disturbed by some unusual sound, when he commenced to write.

A few mornings after this, it was discovered that the store of Mr. Leet had been entered during the night. Boxes, bags, barrels, and nearly everything movable were in just the places where they should not be. Tobacco was strewn along the counters, pipes were buried in sugar, and the shelves concealed by heavy festoons of cloth.

In his indignation, the owner declared half the contents of his store had been stolen; but, upon examination, this did not prove to be true. The money drawer, in which some change had been left, was not robbed; and, indeed, nothing seemed to be really injured.

"Somebody was in search of fun, and so spent the night upsetting things, generally," remarked one of the bystanders.

"Somebody!" repeated Mr. Leet. "I tell you there was more than one engaged in this business; and a good time they must have had of it. Any way, I'll make them pay for their fun."

"Don't be too hard, Leet," responded the wag of the village. "Pretty likely you primed them for the job. You should put a little more water with your liquor, so it wouldn't have so bad an effect. If it was *all* water, it wouldn't do any hurt."

The grocer winced, but none the less was he determined to bring the offenders to justice. Every boy who came in was questioned, to no purpose. Astonished looks, too well worn to be feigned, showed that they knew nothing of the affair.

"Guess you'll have to try the men next," said one.

"Men!" repeated the angry grocer, with a sneer. "You don't catch men moving boxes, and barrels, just for the fun of it. I'm pretty sure who the rogues are, and if I'm not mistaken, they'll find themselves in a tight place, before night."

"Don't threaten, Leet. Let the boys off easy. They may make good customers for

you; and it's best to have an eye to business. Take my advice, and keep cool."

"Here's a jacknife," cried the clerk, who had stumbled upon it, while arranging some boxes.

"Whose is it? Whose is it?"

"Don't know, yet. Here's a name scratched on it, though. John Welcome."

"I thought so," responded Leet. "Give me the knife. I shall have a use for it."

Suspicion thus aroused, was confirmed by the fact that John Welcome and three others, with whom he spent most of his time, had not been seen that morning. Usually on the lookout for everything which promised excitement, it did not seem strange that they were not in the crowd.

Many hands make light work; and by noon, the store was in its accustomed order; improved, some said, as corners were cleaned of rubbish which had accumulated for years.

"Now treat all round, and we'll be off"—Yes, Mr. Leet must do that, of course, and then he was left comparatively alone.

In the afternoon, John Welcome, with his three boon companions, was arrested, on suspicion of having been engaged in the last night's trespass, and again Mr. Stiles mounted the stairs leading to Mark Dunning's room. No sooner was his face seen, than the lawyer guessed his errand.

"Come in, and sit down, my friend."

"I can't stop," replied the old man. "I want you to do something for my grandson. I'll be surety for him, give bail, or whatever you call it. Leet has got a grudge against me, because I asked him not to sell the boy liquor; and it's no use for me to say any thing."

As the speaker paused to recover breath, Mr. Dunning said, "I will attend to the matter. So far as I have heard, the boys took

nothing; and I rather think Leet can be prevailed upon to settle without further trouble."

"I hope he can. It will kill me to have John sent to jail; and his mother is almost beside herself, at the thought of it. She was coming here, to see what could be done."

"Don't be too much distressed, my friend," said the lawyer, kindly. "This may be the best thing that ever happened to John."

"How can it?" was asked.

"It may teach him a good lesson. We need, sometimes, to be arrested suddenly, in our course. I have been waiting for an opportunity to talk with John, and will take advantage of this."

"I hope you will," responded Mr. Stiles. "John might make a smart man."

"No doubt of that. But the first thing to be done now, is to get him out of Leet's clutches. I will attend to it at once. Where is John?"

"At home. Mason came after him; but I begged him off, by promising he shouldn't leave the house, till we could find out what was to be done. I guess I'll go and tell his mother you'll help us. And don't mind about the cost, Mark."

Mr. Leet was surrounded by a group of loungers when Mark Dunning entered his store, and, after a respectful greeting, asked if he could see him on business, for a few minutes.

The grocer made an effort to answer in an easy tone, yet with his best endeavors, there was a slight embarrassment in his manner. The man before him was no stranger, although it was now nearly six months since they had met, except casually, on the street. Times had changed since, as a miserable drunkard, the lawyer had begged for some employment by which he might earn a glass of liquor. Changed, indeed! No one would

have dreamed that, in this very store, he had written diligently for half a day, to procure the means of gratifying the terrible thirst which maddened him.

"Not a drop, till you're through," his employer would say. "I know better than to pay you beforehand. You'll be drunk as soon as you've got some liquor down your throat; and my work won't be done."

To such indignities had Mark Dunning submitted; and for such wages had he worked. Now, he stood demanding an interview with the rumseller, on business.

Mr. Leet was angry; angry at the calm, fixed gaze with which he was regarded; angry in anticipation of the business to which he was summoned. The influence of his old customer was used against him. He had often been made aware of this; and he longed for revenge.

"Must your business be attended to right away?" he asked.

"If convenient for you to do so," was the reply.

"Well, I rather think I know what you came for," said the man, doggedly. "I see old Stiles going towards your office; and I can tell you now, to begin with, that them boys have got to take their chance with the law. I aint going to have my store turned topsy turvy, for nothing."

"We won't discuss the matter here, if you please," said the lawyer. "Can I see you alone?"

Mr. Leet gained courage from those about him; but to talk in a braggart tone, while others were admiring his courage, and to do so alone, with one who was immeasurably his superior, were very different affairs. Then, too, Mark Dunning as a drunkard, and Mark Dunning as a sober, respected lawyer, were very different men. Altogether, the prospect of a private conversation was far from agreeable.

Yet, as it could not be avoided, the rum-seller said, "Walk this way. And Henry, you may bring a bottle of wine," he added, turning to his clerk. "I remember that Mr. Dunning is a good judge of wine."

"I shall not taste your wine," responded the lawyer, quickly. "I came here to talk with you, not to drink liquor. I have done enough of that, in the years that have gone by."

"No matter about the wine, then, Henry," and the speaker's face crimsoned with the consciousness of defeat; while significant smiles and winks were exchanged among the bystanders. Mr. Leet led the way into a back room, and prepared to listen.

"I have come to see what will satisfy you for John Welcome's part of last night's mischief," said his companion.

"I shall be satisfied, when he is punished as he ought to be," was the reply, in a surly

tone. "The rascals have got to pay for their fun."

"But you can't wish to injure the boys, Mr. Leet. It was a very foolish frolic; and they seem to have worked hard for it. I hope you won't push matters with them."

"I thought 'twas John Welcome you come to see about."

"It is. I am only speaking a friendly word for the other boys. Do you know if they had been drinking anywhere, last evening?"

"How should I know?" asked the grocer, sharply. "I don't keep track of other folks' boys. It's as much as I can do to look after my own."

"All parents would be likely to feel like that," was the reply. "Boys have some habits which are not altogether agreeable, and may have loose ideas of property. For instance, they seem to think the best apples and the largest water-melons belong to them, by a

natural right, no matter on whose land they grow."

"I know what you mean by that, Mark Dunning. But I paid old Scriggs all he asked for his truck; so you needn't talk about that. My boys aint any worse than other folks' boys."

"I never heard that they were, Mr. Leet. Now, I wish to pay what will satisfy you for John Welcome's mischief. I wish to settle the matter this afternoon."

"I aint going to settle, I tell you. I'll have them all up before a justice, and see what comes."

"Then I may consider that you absolutely refuse a settlement."

"Yes, I do," said Leet.

"Very well. Good afternoon, sir."

From the grocery, Mark Dunning went to Mrs. Welcome's, where he found her father, still anxious and troubled. John was in a

state of great excitement, wringing his hands, crying, and begging that he might not be sent to jail.

"I'll do anything, mother, if you'll only pay Mr. Leet, so he won't send me. I never'll have anything more to do with Dan Straw."

"Oh, my son, if you had only heard to me, and given him up before, you wouldn't have got into this trouble. I told you, when you began to smoke, where it would end. Oh, what would your father say, if he was alive? If you keep on drinking, you'll die on the gallows."

"Oh mother, don't;" and here the boy broke down entirely. "I won't drink any more," he added, when able to speak. "I won't smoke any more;" and rushing into the kitchen, he threw his pipe on the glowing coals. "Grandfather, won't you help me?" he exclaimed, returning to the sitting room.

It was at this juncture that the lawyer ar-

rived, and after speaking to Mr. Stiles and Mrs. Welcome, addressed himself to John.

"Well, my boy, I have come to talk with you about your last night's frolic. I have just left Mr. Leet, and he seems to be very angry with your company. I wish you to tell me where you spent last evening, and what your motive was in entering the store."

"Yes, John, tell the whole truth," said his grandfather. "You know that's what I told you, in the beginning. Don't add falsehood to the rest of your sins."

"I understood that the boys have acknowledged entering the store," remarked Mr. Dunning.

"Yes, they have," answered the old gentleman. "Dan and Bill denied it at first, till they found it wa'n't of any use; and then they owned up."

John had made a previous confession; but the cross questioning to which he was now

subjected, elicited the whole truth. He, with his companions, had spent the first part of the evening in Leet's store, and some conversation heard there had prompted the mischief they had done.

"Did you drink any liquor in the evening?"

"Yes, sir, once. Dan Straw stood treat, because he won the coppers, in a game of pitch and toss."

"Did you drink more than once?"

"Not in the evening," was John's evasive reply.

"Tell the whole truth," again said his grandfather, and he added, "We drank some after we went into the store."

"You say you heard something which made you think of it. Where did you get a dark lantern, and how could you make your plans at such short notice?"

"Dan Straw has had a dark lantern this good while, and he said he'd read about such

things, so he knew just what to do. We shouldn't tried last night, only we knew Strong was gone, and there wouldn't be any body up stairs."

"What kind of books have you been reading lately?"

Here the boy hung his head, and seemed more unwilling to answer than at any time before, but his grandfather's reiterate command forced him to speak. "I've been reading some Dan Straw lent me."

"Have you any here?"

"Only one," he answered, hesitatingly.

"I should like to see that one."

Of course, this had no direct bearing upon the case under consideration, yet the book was brought from its hiding place.

"The best thing you can do with this book is to burn it," said the lawyer, after giving it a slight examination. "You must give up such readings, if you wish to be a decent man."

Mrs. Welcome disposed of the book by placing it beside the pipe, and the questioning went on for the next quarter of an hour.

Then, Mark Dunning professed himself satisfied, and rose to leave.

"Won't you do something for me?" cried John Welcome.

"I will do what I can," was the reply. "But you must do for yourself."

"What *can* I do?"

"Obey your mother in all things; take your grandfather's advice, and give up bad companions."

"I will, I will, Mr. Dunning; but don't let them send me to jail."

This was in the old days, when, for a mere pittance paid into the town treasury, men were licensed to deal out death and ruin, at their pleasure. But, at some time in the history of the town, a vote had passed, which made any dealer liable to a fine of five dollars

for selling to a minor, without the consent of his parents or guardian. This vote was recorded; yet never having been put in force, few remembered its existence.

Mark Dunning was one of the few, whose memory served him, and he resolved to take advantage of the dead letter law. To make all sure, he went to the office of the town clerk, and satisfied himself that no contrary action had been taken. Then to Mr. Leet again.

By this time, the grocer, encouraged by his friends, was even less inclined to compromise than he had been at the previous visit. He bowed carelessly, with a cold greeting, as the lawyer entered his store.

"Can I see you on business, Mr. Leet? It seems necessary that I should trouble you again."

"Some more about them boys, I suppose. You might as well say what you want to, right

here. It aint any secret, what I mean to do, and I shan't change my mind."

Mark Dunning hesitated before replying. "*I* have nothing to lose by making my business public," he said, at length. "But, as a friend, I advise you to give me a private interview."

Mr. Leet was troubled. He felt sure that in some way the speaker had gained an advantage since they last met, and without further parley, he yielded the point. The lawyer asked no favors. On the contrary, it was Leet's turn to sue for favor, when assured that he was liable to a series of prosecutions for violating the conditions of his license.

"The boys who entered your store last night, bought liquor here in the evening; and the fines for selling to them would be twenty dollars. If these fines should be collected, as they certainly *shall* be, if you refuse to settle with the friends of John Welcome,

others will be likely to remember instances where you have sold to boys, against the wishes of their parents. There was John Williams. His mother came to you repeatedly. I know that, for I saw her here, and heard what she said. When the boy died, at last, after exposure that awful January night, when you drove him out into the storm, an action might have been brought against you for something more than selling liquor."

The grocer had no choice but to listen to this grouping of facts, and answered, tremulously, "I hope you won't prosecute me, Mr. Dunning. I've always been a good friend to you."

"The least said about friendship between us, the better, although I have no wish to injure you," was the reply.

"I'll do just what you want me to, if you won't prosecute me for selling. I didn't

mean to violate the law. And, Mr. Dunning, don't tell anybody about the fines. I won't make any trouble for the boys. Let it all go."

"Do you mean what you say, Mr. Leet?"

"Yes, sir," — the rumseller was growing very respectful.

"You will withdraw your complaint, pay the costs which have been made, and say no more about it."

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are safe, in regard to fines for this offence, so far as I am concerned, and in behalf of John Welcome, I will pay one quarter of the costs already incurred."

"No matter about that, Mr. Dunning. It aint much, any way; not enough to be worth mentioning. Let it go."

But this did not suit the lawyer's sense of justice; and moreover, it would not be best for any one concerned. The just proportion was paid.

"Settled up this time, Leet?" asked one of the group, who waited to hear the news.

"Yes," was the gruff reply. "I wa'n't going to have any more fuss about it. Old Dan Straw has been here twice, to-day; and I expect the others will come before bedtime. I'm sick of so much fuss. I've scared the boys pretty well, and now they may go," he added, with a laugh which was anything but cheerful.

He was thinking of John Williams' death. Not a pleasant subject of thought, but rum-sellers must, from the very nature of their business, have many unpleasant reflections. Of course, there was much curiosity to know what had changed his mind so suddenly; and, although the exact truth was not known until long after, it was evident that some strong influence had been brought to bear upon him.

John Welcome was a happy boy when told that he need have no more fears of the jail;

and in his gratitude was ready to make any promises which might be demanded.

"Come to my office to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock," said the lawyer. "I wish to talk with you."

"Yes, sir," was the trembling reply. "I'll come."

"And don't go any nearer to the hotel and Leet's store than is necessary."

"No, sir, I won't. But how much is there to pay, Mr. Dunning?"

"I will settle with your grandfather about that."

"But I want to know. I'm going to work and earn the money; and please tell me how much it is."

"Not to-night," answered Mr. Dunning. "I must go back to my office. Be sure that I see you there in the morning."

"Yes, sir."

The next morning, John Welcome rapped

timidly at the office door, and was bidden to enter.

"Good morning, my boy. I am glad to see you. Take that chair opposite me. Did you come directly from home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't stop at Leet's?"

"No, sir. I never shall go there again, unless mother sends me."

"Then you won't be likely to go there very soon," remarked the lawyer. "I wished you to come here, so we could have a talk all by ourselves. I presume, however, you didn't wish to come."

"I knew I ought to come," was the evasive reply.

"Well, that will do, for the present. Next time I ask you, I hope you will be glad to come. I have a story to tell you, and most boys like to hear stories."

"Yes, sir, *I* do."

"I am glad of that, for my story has a moral, by which I hope you will be profited;" and then Mark Dunning outlined the history of his own life, abating nothing of the poverty and wretchedness which, for the last few years had characterized it.

"Now, what do you think of a man who will do like that?" he asked, in conclusion.

"I think he is a fool," answered the boy, quickly, with flashing eyes. "If *I* could make so much money, and live so nice, I wouldn't" ——

"You wouldn't be a drunkard," interrupted his companion.

"No, sir, I wouldn't."

"That is just what I should have said, at your age; just what the man whose story I have been telling you would have said."

"Then what made him do so?" asked John.

"I can't tell you. He never wished to be a drunkard."

"And is he one now?"

"What do you think? Am I a drunkard?"

John Welcome, dumb with astonishment, looked at the speaker.

"I have told you my own story; not the worst of it, for that would be impossible. Now, do you wish to be a drunkard?"

"No, sir, I *won't* be a drunkard," replied John, shuddering at the thought of such a fate. "I never *will* be a drunkard," he added, a moment after. "I never'll drink another glass of liquor, as long as I live, and I never'll use any tobacco, either."

"Then you are safe, my boy," said Mark Dunning. "Give me your hand;" and across the table two hands met in a strong, firm clasp. "I believe you will keep your promise; but you must ask God to help you."

"Yes, sir, I will," sobbed the boy.

"Now I know you are not sorry you came

here, and you must come again, whenever you need advice. My Arthur is coming home soon, and then we shall be glad to see you at our house."

"Thank you, Mr. Dunning. Thank you for the story, too."

Only fifteen years of age, it was not very strange that a fatherless boy, influenced by bad companions, should have acquired the habits which are ruining thousands, — I had almost said millions — of the young men of our country. He had now received what was to him a severe and timely lesson, which, judging from his appearance, he would not soon forget.

On his way home, he met Dan Straw, swaggering down the street, with an air expressing the contemptuous indifference to public opinion, which such as he consider manly.

"Hallo, John," cried the coarse fellow, removing a pipe from his mouth, and puffing

out a cloud of tobacco smoke. "How are you, this morning?"

"Very well," was the cool reply.

"Old Leet had a good time of it, didn't he?" continued Dan; and this was followed by a vulgar laugh, which grated strangely on the listener's ears. "He talked pretty loud, about jail and damages; but he cooled off, before night. I told you we should come out all right. The best thing we can do now, is to celebrate, over by the pond, this afternoon. What do you say to that? Why, you look like a whipped baby! What has come over you? Going to play good boy, and be tied to mother's apron strings."

"I am going to *be* a good boy," said John Welcome, decidedly. "If my mother wants to tie me to her apron strings, she can. I am willing."

"Fool!" muttered his companion, with a profane accompaniment. "You never *was*

half a man, yet; always whimpering and holding back, when there was any fun on hand. Come," he added, changing his tactics. "You'll get over this. Let's hunt up Bill and Tom."

"No, Dan, I don't want to see them; and I might as well tell you now, that I've turned over a new leaf. I've got through with tobacco and liquor; all through, and done with them forever. You'd better follow my example."

"No you don't," said the wicked boy, shaking his head menacingly at his retreating companion. "I'll see about that."

Mr. Stiles was waiting John's return, and listened with great interest to a report of the morning's adventures. "You're in earnest about your promise," remarked the old man.

"Yes, grandfather, I am. You'll see that. I'm going to do just what you and mother say, all the time. I hope, though, you won't

tell me I must go to school every day. I'd rather work. I want to learn a trade."

"What trade?" asked the grandfather.

"The machinist's," John replied.

"Well, I've no objection to that, if you'll stay at home. There'll be a good shop here, as soon as they get started; and I'll speak to your guardian about it. I do wish you took to books, John."

"I wish I did, grandfather; but I don't. I'll try, though, if you and mother say so."

"That's right, my boy. We'll see. Just now, there is plenty for you to do round here. It's about time to plow the garden, and I heard your mother say that she had to split some wood, before she could make a fire, this morning. If you want to work, there's a chance for you in the shed."

"Yes, sir, I guess there is," responded the boy. "Mother shan't split any more wood this year, if my hands last."

Mattie, the baby, as all called her, although she was four years of age, went to see "budder John" saw wood; and amused herself by carrying into the kitchen one stick after another, until the capacious wood-box was filled. Then she clapped her dimpled hands, and shouted gleefully, while the mother's face grew radiant with happiness.

John was celebrating, in a homely way, while Dan Straw, with two companions, went to the pond. There they took possession of a boat, rowed out into the deepest water, drank each from a bottle of liquor, with some foolish ceremonies, and then made their way to a small island, where they proposed to "lay off," beguiling the time with some books, brought for that purpose. Smoking, drinking occasionally from the black bottle, and reading such pages as the most unprincipled wretch might blush to write, the afternoon wore away.

After all, it was not half so jolly as they had anticipated, and they were glad when the sun went down. It was time then to go home; but upon looking for the boat, it was not to be found. In their carelessness, they had forgotten to secure it. Where it was now they could only guess.

"Down stream, of course," said Bill, with an ominous hiccough. "Likely it's caught at the point. Dan, you might swim down there, and see."

"Swim there yourself," was the reply. "I've done my part, furnishing liquor for you, and the old boat may go, for all I care."

"Who'll pay for it, if it gets smashed?" asked Bill.

"I don't know. The one that took it, I suppose. That wa'n't me."

"Who was it then, I should like to know?"

They disputed for some time, cursing each other in a terrible way, and at last coming to

blows. Fighting, however, did not continue long, for, half tipsy though they were, they had sense enough to know this would not help them out of their trouble.

Dan was the only one who could swim, and he was persuaded to go in search of the boat. But, in attempting to cross the river, his clothes were carried down stream, leaving him in a sorry plight. He was obliged to conceal himself in the bushes, until after dark, when he slunk home, without making any provision for the rescue of his companions, who spent the night upon the island. Not until the next morning, were they found; two more forlorn looking boys than are often seen in a country town.

Then, as usual after *all* celebrations, the bill must be settled. A boat had been ruined, and its owner insisted upon being paid more than its actual value.

John Welcome hearing of this, thought him-

self a lucky boy, that he had nothing to do with it, and again thanked Mr. Dunning for the advice he had received. "There are lots of other boys that need talking to," he said.

"I know there are," replied the lawyer.

"Lots of them," continued John. "They think they behave like men, when they chew tobacco, and smoke, and drink liquor. They laugh at me for not doing as I used to."

"Never mind that. Those who win are the ones to laugh. Do as your mother says, and you'll come out right."

The last of May, Arthur Dunning came home. He was to recite to his father through the summer, and in the autumn, enter some good academy, to prepare for college. Mr. Clement expressed great regret at losing his young clerk, declaring that he was the best boy he ever saw. "There's a character for you to sustain, Arthur."

"Yes, sir, I'll do as well as I can;" and

surely, no one had reason to complain of this. For eight hours of each day, he studied or wrote in his father's office, while much of the remaining time he spent in cultivating a small garden, every foot of which was made to yield a good return for his labor. Sometimes he provided the family with a luxurious breakfast of river fish. Thus always employed, he was always happy, and guarded against temptation. Every one smiled upon him, and wished him success in a far different way from that which characterized his friends, a year before, when he was a drunkard's son. Now, he was the son of 'Squire Dunning, as old people called his father; and 'Squire Dunning was a rising man.

This was apparent to all. Even Alfred Hanson acknowledged that his cousin was doing well, and bade fair yet to occupy a high position.

"I didn't believe Mark would hold out so,"

he said to Tom Giles, with whom he was on somewhat familiar terms. "It must have been hard work at the beginning, and I thought he'd give up."

"I thought so, too, till I heard him talk, about two months ago," was the reply.

"What did he say?"

"He said a great deal; more than I can remember. 'Twas that day old Mr. Wilcox was buried from the town farm, and there were a good many standing round, after the grave was filled up. I tell you, Mark talked like a minister, or a lawyer, just which you're a mind to call it. He's got a glib tongue of his own."

"He always had that," replied Mr. Hanson, "But what was he talking about?"

"About drinking liquor. And he told a good deal of truth; though I don't believe in his total abstinence. It aint the thing for me, any way."

"Nor for me, either," was the response. "I hope I've sense enough to control myself, and stop, when I've drinked what's good for me."

"I'm pretty sure I have," said Tom Giles. "But then you know we can carry off more than some folks. I've seen Mark Dunning drunk as a fiddler, on one glass. If I could only got a spoonful of liquor down his throat before last court, I'd had that Dunn lot, safe and sure."

"How? I don't see that exactly."

"You don't? Why, I thought you understand all about Mark's ways. If he'd got the taste of liquor, he couldn't stop till it was all over with him. I could have managed him then, papers and all. That's what I mean, and I guess he knows it. He's doing well, now."

"Yes, people say so," replied Mr. Hanson.

"Oh, there's no mistake about it. He'll

have business enough. I don't like him very well for what he did last winter; but I'll give him the credit of being smart."

"I suppose he *is* smart," was the absent reply.

"That's what he is, and he's got a smart boy, too, that will turn out a chip of the old block."

What possessed Tom Giles to talk in this manner and then ride rapidly away, Mr. Hanson could not imagine. The truth, doubtless, had been spoken; but, as every one knows, it is not always agreeable to hear the truth.

The man left standing by himself, was where he could command a fine view of the place, which Mark Dunning had called home for fifteen years of his life; and, better than any one else did this man understand why the old roof tree no longer sheltered him. Better, too, than any one else, did this man understand how, in the mysterious linking of

events, it came to pass that his uncle's namesake had fallen into disgrace and poverty. It may be that some self accusations mingled with his musings; yet, upon one point he was resolved. However much others might praise the reformed lawyer, he would not be one to do him honor. Their paths in life must lie far apart.

Only a few days after this, while Mr. Hanson was superintending some work in his garden, a boy came rushing up to him with the cry, "Walter is in the river."

"Where?" asked the father, but the messenger had fallen exhausted, and there was no reply.

Mr. Forbes, first called, had already reached the river, and received Walter from the arms of Arthur Dunning.

"Is he dead? Is he dead?" asked one and another.

"Nowhere near it," was the reply "Stand back and give me room. Here, Arthur, take

hold and help me, if you aint in a hurry to get off your wet clothes."

"I don't mind them at all," said Arthur, lending his aid to restore consciousness to the half drowned boy.

"All right, now," exclaimed Mr. Forbes, as Walter opened his eyes. "Get me a blanket, somewhere, and I'll have Walter at home before his mother has a chance to be frightened."

A blanket was brought from the nearest house, and when Mr. Hanson arrived, all danger was over.

"Give my boy to me," he said, in a voice trembling with emotion. "I will carry him, myself. I can't stop now, to ask who saved him; but, whoever it was shall be well rewarded."

"I wonder what reward he thinks you want," remarked one of the bystanders to Arthur, who was gathering up the articles he had

thrown from him, before plunging into the water.

"I know what reward I shall *have*," was the reply.

"What?" was asked, curiously.

"The knowledge that I have done my duty, and *only* my duty. It is nothing to go into the water here, as you all know; but somebody must have done it, or Walter Hanson would have drowned. I am glad I was where I heard the alarm."

That evening Arthur Dunning received a note, asking him to come to the Oaks, where the whole family wished to express their gratitude to him. What shall I do, mother? he asked.

"Consult your father, and do as he says," replied Mrs. Dunning. "It seems to me that it would be proper for Mr. Hanson to come here, if he wishes to see you."

"So I think, mother. I hope father will think so too."

His father did think so, and a polite assurance that no thanks were desired, was sent to Mr. Hanson.

The next morning, the gentleman called, and enquired for Arthur.

"You will find him at Mr. Dunning's office," replied his mother.

"I am under the greatest obligations to him, for saving my boy," said Mr. Hanson. "I can never repay him; but I wish in some fitting way to express my gratitude. His saving my boy was a noble deed."

"Only his duty," was the reply. "Arthur says he incurred no danger, and deserves no praise. He is accustomed to the water."

"But that does not make what he has done any less to me. I must see him, and tell him how grateful I am."

He had an opportunity to do this, without going again to the cottage. Arthur was walking down the street, when Mr. Hanson called,

"Arthur Dunning, I wish to see you;" and the boy thus addressed waited for him to come up.

"Good morning," he said, extending his hand cordially. "I have something to say to you. Let us step into the hotel, where we can talk at our leisure."

"You must excuse me from going in there, Mr. Hanson. I never go into the hotel."

"And why not?" was asked.

"Because liquor is sold there, and it is no place for me. If you will come into father's office, I will go back."

A flush of anger suffused the gentleman's face; yet, remembering the object for which he sought this boy, he hastened to speak calmly. "It is hardly worth while to do that. I will walk with you;" and then followed an awkward silence, which Arthur was first to break, by enquiring for Walter.

"He is all right," was the reply. "We are

indebted to you for his life, and anxious, in some fitting way, to express our gratitude. To say we *thank* you is very little. You have laid us under the greatest obligations."

"Why, Mr. Hanson, I don't think so, at all," said Arthur, frankly. "There was no danger for me, in going into the water. I am glad I was there; but please don't talk as though I did anything wonderful."

"I see you are modest, as you were brave," remarked his companion. "Still, we must be grateful, and if I can ever be of service to you, remember that you have strong claims upon me. I was commissioned to bring you to The Oaks. What shall I say to my wife and children? Will you come?"

"Thank you, Mr. Hanson; but I have some business to do for father, and must be excused."

It was not easy to patronize Arthur Dunning; and the trial thus made resulted as

might have been anticipated. Later in the day, when Walter came running up to him with extended hands, he listened to the boy's thanks, with a beaming face.

"We felt real bad, because you didn't come to see us last night," said Walter.

"Did you?" was asked, in reply.

"Yes, indeed, and Flo almost cried. She wanted to tell you how glad she was, and she is going to now, the very first time she sees you. Mother says you're somebody to be proud of, and I told Barty I wished you were my brother."

Flora Hanson, unable to express her gratitude to Arthur personally, charged Grace with a message, which was faithfully delivered. "She said she didn't blame you at all, for not coming here, last evening, though they all wanted to see you," added the sister.

"I shouldn't think she ought to blame our Arthur," chimed in Barty. "He's just the

best boy in the world. Mother thinks so too, and I heard father say he was a great comfort."

CHAPTER V.

No sin without its stain,
No guilt without its pain;
Each lightly woven strand
Grows firm as iron band.

IT was about two years and a half from the trial of her land case, that Mrs Conant, returning from a ride to the village, exclaimed, "I believe the Lord helps Mark Dunning, every day of his life."

"The Lord helps us all, doesn't he?" asked Ella Bond.

"To be sure, child; but we see it plainer with some folks, than others, and I see it with Mr. Dunning. I went in to have a little chat with his wife, this morning; and nothing to

do but I must take off my things and stop to dinner. 'Twas a good dinner, too, and I enjoyed every minute of my visit. Mr. Dunning asked a blessing at the table, and he's a real Christian, if I know what a Christian *is*. Mr. Ware wants him to join the church."

"And why doesn't he, grandmother?"

"That's just the question. I took the liberty to ask, to-day, and his answer made the tears come into my eyes. I wouldn't have believed it, if anybody else had told me, and now it don't seem as though it could be true. He said he couldn't trust himself to take wine at the communion. He don't go to meeting communion days, because he don't want to pass the wine to his wife. He said he'd prayed over it a good deal, and he hoped he should feel strong enough, some time, to come forward. It's a dreadful thing, and there must be something wrong, somewhere, if poor souls can't come to the Lord's table, without

being tempted back to sin. I must have a talk with Mr. Ware about it."

The old lady was getting excited, and to divert her attention, Ella asked if she had seen Grace Dunning.

"To be sure I have. She was home to dinner, and sent her love to you; though like as not, I should forgot it, if you hadn't mentioned her. She wants you to make her a visit. She's got a new piano, her father bought a little while ago."

Ella's eyes danced as she answered, "I knew Grace was going to have a new piano. I wish my father had lived; then perhaps I might have one."

"Perhaps you might," replied her grandmother. "We never thought of such things when I was a girl. We had to make music with the spinning wheel; but times have changed since then, and I don't want to say they're any worse. You're a good girl, Ella,

and I wish you could have everything you want. Oh, another thing. Miss Dunning said she'd board you this fall, if you want to go to school in the village."

"But, mother," said Mrs. Bond.

"Well, what about but mother? I suppose I know what you mean. You needn't trouble *yourself* about the pay. I'll attend to that. There's plenty of things here on the farm that Miss Dunning wants, and I'm going to manage the business myself without any of your help."

Then there were two such happy laughs from grandmother and granddaughter; after which the latter went out caroling a merry song.

"You spoil that girl, mother. You never indulged me as you do her."

"Didn't I? Well, Matildy, perhaps I didn't; but I meant to do right by you, and I don't want to do any more than that by

Ella, though she's the singing bird of the house. Times change, you know."

"Yes, I know they do, and people change with them," replied Mrs. Bond, cheerfully. "Did you enquire of Mrs. Dunning if they are going to move this fall?"

"Of course I did. I wanted to know; and she says they shan't move at present. They're in pretty close quarters, but they can get along, and they want to educate their children. She's just like her mother about that. Miss Barnes must give Grace an education, whether or no, and I used to think the girl never'd be worth anything to work."

"But she has been for all that, mother."

"Yes, and that shows you can't tell what's going to happen. Miss Dunning's as good a housekeeper as there is in town, and she don't make any fuss about it, either. It's a real treat to sit down to her table, everything looks so neat. But there, I must stop

talking and look after the bees. I hope they'll do well this year."

Mrs. Conant had never ceased to feel an interest in Mark Dunning and his family since she first carried to their cottage such store of good things; and, although they were no longer objects of charity, she yet insisted upon sharing with them the luxuries of her farm.

Having so long abstained from the use of intoxicating drinks, the lawyer was beginning to have more confidence in himself; yet he scrupulously avoided all places where he would be exposed to more than ordinary temptation. "I may fall when I least expect it," he said to his wife. "My life must be one of watchfulness."

"But, Mark, you can't have any desire for stimulants, now."

"Sometimes I have," he answered, seriously. "If the fumes of wine should reach me

at such times, I couldn't be sure of my powers of resistance."

Soon after this it was necessary for him to take a journey in order to transact some business, and during this absence from home his strength was severely tested. Repeatedly was he asked to drink wine, and often he caught the sparkle of the treacherous liquor, but through all by God's grace, he was true to himself. He conversed with many whose breath made the very air a means of temptation, from which he turned with a sickening shudder. The battle with him was to be life long. There would never come a time when he could relax his vigilance.

Perhaps the constant self control he was forced to exercise, assisted him to a better development of his whole nature; and made him more reliable than he would otherwise have been. Certain it is that he was universally trusted, and his opinion quoted as suffi-

cient authority. A close student he did not flatter himself as having yet attained, but, striving to forget those things which were behind, he pressed forward.

His profession now afforded him a generous income, and had he consulted only his own tastes, he would have assumed a different style of living. But his wife, who had managed the household affairs so long and so well, thought it best to make no change. When Arthur is through college, and Grace has finished her school education, it will be time to talk of a larger house," said Mrs. Dunning. "We have been very happy here, and my highest ambition at present is to own our cottage and garden."

"Then your ambition shall be gratified," said her husband; and the following week he placed in her hands a deed of their home. "You see it is yours, Grace. I wished to guard against the possibility of your losing

it." It was really wonderful how the fact of ownership seemed to increase the size of this cottage; and soon it was found that there was room for many articles of furniture which would before have seemed out of place. Barty thought his chamber was a great deal higher, and guessed Arthur never'd bump his head again.

Another year, this was in reality true; the roof being raised, so that the boys were no longer reminded that they must accommodate themselves to circumstances. The following summer an addition was made which gave a new look to the cottage, and increased materially the comfort of its inmates.

When Arthur came home, he congratulated himself with every other member of the family; and Grace in reply, said if there were some large trees on the place, she thought it would be nearly as pleasant as The Oaks.

"We shall have some large trees pretty

soon. Don't you see how ours grow? asked Barty, who always looked through magnifying glasses. "We shall have an orchard, too. There's an apple tree in the middle of most every bed in the garden; and I don't know but father'll buy a farm next year."

"And shall you be the farmer?" asked Arthur.

"I don't know but I shall," was the reply. "Uncle John says I should make a first rate farmer, and we don't want more than two lawyers in the family. Mother says I keep the garden looking as nice as you did."

"No doubt of it, Barty. You do everything well, and if you wish to be a farmer, no one will object."

"But I shan't have a dirty farm, where the pigs live in the front yard," exclaimed the boy. "I should want it real nice and clean; and I should want a piano, and books, and pictures, just as much as though I was a lawyer.

And I mean to keep bees, too. Mrs. Conant says she'll tell me how to take care of them."

"I don't see but what your plans are all laid," replied Arthur. "Have you selected your farm?"

"Not yet," was the serious answer. "I've thought some about it. But there's no hurry. I'm only thirteen yet."

"And you may change your mind, within the next thirteen years."

"I don't change my mind very often," said Barton, decidedly.

"Then you must be sure you are right, in the outset," remarked his father, who had entered the room in time to hear this assertion.

"I try to be," said Barty.

"I think you do, my son. I have no fault to find with you. My children have been trained by a good mother, and I trust they will repay her care."

"We shall, father," was the reply. "Mother

is going to live like a lady; and we are to be her willing servants."

Could words paint the contrast between this scene and many which had been witnessed in Mark Dunning's home, less than six years before, every reader would be fully convinced of the blessing of temperance. Drunkenness, with its hosts of squalid attendants, had fled the house. Plenty crowned the board, and love so lightened necessary labor, that each day was a glad thanksgiving festival.

"It's the pleasantest place to visit in town," said Mrs. Forbes. "It does me good to see Mark and Grace with their children; and I don't believe anybody can be happier than they are. Alfred Hanson may chuckle over his riches; but it's my opinion he'll see the day when he'd be glad to change places with his cousin. He looked pretty old, the last time I saw him, and his wife has lost all the beauty she ever had."

"That's a fact, and I guess pretty near everything goes wrong at The Oaks," was Mr. Forbes' reply. "According to what I hear, there's scolding in the kitchen, and scolding in the parlor. Walter is getting headstrong, and his mother won't have him crossed, if she can help it. His father will see trouble with him, if I'm any judge of signs. I've always expected Hanson would be punished."

"He's punished pretty well, now, husband. It hurts him to see Mark prosper."

"There's a good chance for his being hurt, then. Mark is smart, and don't seem to know it, either. I mean he don't brag, and make a fuss about it. He can't be hired to do wrong, either. He'll work as hard to get justice done to a poor woman who can't pay him a cent, as he will if he expects a great fee. I told him so once, and he said he always thought of his wife, when he saw a poor friendless woman."

"I suppose he thinks of his wife, as she was ten years ago," responded Mrs. Forbes. "There wouldn't anybody think of calling her poor and friendless now. I saw her riding with Arthur, the other day, and she didn't look old enough to be his mother."

"I thought so myself, Sarah, the last time I saw them together. Arthur seemed as proud of her as though she was a queen. And she'll have reason to be proud of *him*. He's going to make a fine man."

"He is almost a man now," was the reply. "Arthur will be twenty-one in October. He will be almost twenty-two, when he is through college."

"It don't seem possible that he can be so old."

"No, it don't. But it's almost six years since you found his father in the lower summer house, at The Oaks. What a night that was for us all! I wonder if Mark ever thinks of it."

"To be sure he does, and talks about it, too. But there's somebody driving up to the barn, and I must go and see who it is."

Mr. Forbes was now living upon a farm, about three miles from the village, he having left The Oaks four years previous. Wishing to be his own master, the offer of extra wages was no inducement for him to remain longer as Alfred Hanson's foreman. He was the owner of a good substantial house, a valuable wood lot, and land, which was easily cultivated, so that, although his farm was in a retired situation, every one said he had made a good bargain, and the friends of himself and wife did not allow them to be lonely.

Visiting Aunt Sarah was one of Flora Hanson's greatest pleasures; and if Grace Dunning chanced also to be a guest, her pleasure was enhanced. These young girls had been fast friends through all their school days, notwithstanding the influence which had been

exerted to separate them. Even now, Flora's mother spoke of the Dunnings with an ill concealed dislike, which she would have manifested more openly, but for her husband.

Occasionally, during their vacation, Grace and Arthur called at The Oaks; and in consideration of services rendered by the latter, were received cordially. Mr. Hanson making a point of remembering this service, sometimes alluded to it, in a way which was far from agreeable.

"I suppose you are looking forward, impatiently, to finishing your education," said the hostess to Grace, during one of these calls.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Hanson," was the reply. "I *never* expect to finish my education; and I am sometimes sorry that I am so nearly through with school."

"You are!" exclaimed the lady, with surprise. "Flora talks in that way; but I was

so glad to be through with school, that I didn't wish to look in a book for a year, at least. Flora is always studying something, I don't know what," she added, glancing at her step-daughter.

"She is a very fine scholar," replied Grace. "The pride of her class, and a favorite with her teachers."

It was well for Flora Hanson that she did love study; else, while at home, she would have had few resources of happiness. Between her mother and herself there had never been any sympathy; her father was cold and stern, and her brother so selfish and boisterous, that his presence was dreaded.

From hearing Flora so often blamed, Walter had come to address her, rudely and unkindly: spurning her sisterly counsels, and seldom manifesting for her anything like affection. Mrs. Hanson, a vain, foolish woman, envious of her step-daughter's beauty and

superiority, made no effort to change this order of things; while the father had matters of more importance under consideration. He wished to have Flora well educated and accomplished, that she might do honor to the position in society which would be accorded his daughter; beyond this, he troubled himself little in regard to her.

The pride of her class, and a favorite with her teachers, as has been said, it was only at home that she missed kindness and appreciation. If her loving heart had been capable of envy, she would have envied Grace Dunning the warm welcome and tender affection which awaited her at each return.

For obvious reasons, Mrs. Dunning and Mrs. Hanson had never exchanged calls; although their husbands recognized each other civilly, whenever circumstances obliged them to meet. It is quite probable that Alfred Hanson would have done his part to

establish more cordial relations. Mark Dunning, however, could not forget the past, and entirely distrusting the man who had so cruelly wronged him, was content with a mere nominal acquaintance.

People observing this, made their own comments, far from complimentary to one of the parties. Even Leet, the rumseller, shrugged his shoulders, whenever he witnessed a meeting between the two gentlemen.

"Wonder how Hanson enjoys himself, now-a-days," he said to a lounging customer. "He won't have much to brag of, over Dunning, in a few years."

"Haint got much now," was the reply. "Nothing but money; and a smart lawyer can earn that pretty fast."

"I guess he can. They say Dunning makes money. Works hard, and lives prudently."

"Yes," answered the customer, with an ugly leer. "If everybody lived as he does,

you'd have to give up your liquor business. I tell you what 'tis, Leet, we're a pack of fools, to pay you so much money."

"You get your money's worth back, don't you?"

"No, you know we don't; and we shouldn't, if we got what we called for. I read a story the other day, I've thought a good deal about, and I guess 'twould be a good thing if other folks should read it."

"You might set up for a tract distributor," said Leet, sneeringly. "I've read of such doing a great deal of good."

"So have I, and the story I liked so well, was a tract. One of my boys brought it home from the city. 'Twas wrapped round something he bought. I 'spose there's plenty more like it, somewhere. If I had a lot, I'd scatter 'em round."

"Bring me one, will you?"

"Guess I will. I aint none of your partial

kind ;" and the speaker went out, chuckling, while Leet looked vexed and gloomy.

Half an hour later, his gloom and vexation were increased. Mr. Dunning called, of course, upon business. The rumseller knew that, without being told.

"I have come in behalf of Mrs. Jones," said the visitor. "She has been told that her her son spends most of his evenings here."

"He is here, sometimes," was the reply.

"Very often, I think," remarked the lawyer, coolly. "He drinks liquor here, goes home partially intoxicated, and makes his friends a great deal of trouble. That is how the case stands, and he is not twenty years of age. A minor, in point of law ; and his guardian has never given you permission to sell him liquor. *Most* of the apprentices in the machine shop are minors."

"Well, what if they are ?" asked Mr. Leet, with some hesitation.

"You have no right to sell them liquor."

"I aint the only one that sells," was the reply.

"And you are not the only one who can be fined," responded the lawyer. "It is necessary that the law should be enforced. What will you do?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Do you mean to ask what I would advise you to do?"

"Yes," answered the rumseller, in a surly tone.

"I should advise you to give up selling liquor, altogether."

"But I've got a license; and I've just as good a right to sell that, as anything else."

"You have a legal right to sell to those over twenty-one years of age. But what shall I tell Mrs. Jones?"

"Tell her what you're a mind to. I shan't have anything more to do with her boy. He

never'll get another drop of liquor in *my* store. I don't see, though, why you should come to me, any more than half a dozen others."

"There is no reason why I should; only in this particular case, I was requested to come to you. I shall be very glad to tell Mrs. Jones that you will sell no more liquor to her boy."

"And I shall be glad to get rid of the whole pack of machine boys," said Mr. Leet, with angry emphasis.

Mark Dunning had been unwilling to visit the rumsellers of the town; but the time had come when it was plainly the duty of some one to make an effort to save the young men and boys. So long as they could buy liquor, many of them would drink it; and to prevent its sale seemed the most effectual means.

With some, the lawyer remonstrated; others, he threatened; but from all, he obtained the desired promise, and the very next

day, it was known that no liquor would be sold publicly, at least, to any one under age.

There was loud talking and swearing among those thus denied their accustomed drink. "As much money as we've paid Leet, it's a shame to have him turn against us, in this way," said one. "Welcome, come here. Is this any of your work? Been threatening to prosecute anybody for selling liquor?"

"No, *sir*," was the reply. "I've something else to do; though I should be glad if the rum-shops were shut up. They'd shut themselves, if everybody was of my mind."

"Shut, for want of customers, I suppose you mean."

"That's it, exactly. If there was no one to buy, there would be no one to sell; and the whole matter would be settled without any trouble."

"That's just like you, Welcome. Always preaching temperance and trying to keep us fellows from enjoying ourselves."

"Enjoying yourselves!" said John Welcome with a quizzical smile, and walked away,

"What's the use talking to him?" asked one of the group. "We all know just what he'll say. He's preached to me till I'm sick of it, and wish he'd hold his tongue. Smart fellow, though. I heard the boss say the other day he could see through a machine as well as though he'd been making them twenty years. As for me I hate the sight of a machine, and wish somebody would leave me a fortune so I could bid good-bye to work."

"All you want just now is something to drink; and we'll see if there aint some to be had before we're twenty-four hours older;" all which being enforced by a succession of oaths, was thought to be a very smart speech.

They failed, however, of their intentions; for at the end of twenty-four hours they were fully convinced that boys would be obliged to go elsewhere for liquor, unless they could

obtain it in some clandestine manner; and strangely enough no one seemed disposed to assist them in doing this. Yet no one seemed to know the cause of this prohibition. Eber Jones fancied his mother could tell, but he was not disposed to ask; and after a time he ceased to care. Mr. Dunning spoke to him in a way which quite won his heart, and made him resolve to do his best.

As winter drew near, the more intelligent part of the community wished to provide some means of benefiting themselves and entertaining others who had fewer resources. It was suggested that possibly a course of lectures might be sustained; although an attempt made years before had proved an entire failure.

"We must do something," said Mr. Ware to his brother clergymen. "We must teach our young men that there are better ways of spending time than in smoking, drinking and

gambling; and we must try to inspire them with a desire to read good books instead of annals of crime and impossible adventures. We can't expect to take away from them what they consider adds to their happiness without giving them something in return. We must be wise in this matter if we would win their souls."

"Yes, brother Ware, and I am ready to aid in the good work if I only knew how it should be done. If somebody else will furnish the plan I will try to help carry it out."

"That will hardly do, brother Heath. You must both plan, and execute. Brother Austin, what do you say?"

"I have been thinking," was the characteristic reply. "I was a boy once myself. A pretty wild one, too; and ever since then I have been greatly interested in all boys."

"You ought to be, brother, now that you have four to bring up."

"Yes, and if the Lord spares them and me, I will try to do it conscientiously. In the first place I intend to make home attractive to them, even if I do it sometime at the expense of my own comfort. But I am wandering from the subject under discussion. As I am a new comer here, I prefer to follow the lead of my brethren; yet I think I may be allowed to say that a stronger public opinion in favor of temperance would benefit your community."

"Indeed, it would, brother Austin; and the great question now is how we shall rouse the people from their apathy. Occasionally some event transpires which creates a little excitement, but it soon subsides. It has been proposed to try a course of lectures the coming winter, and I am moving a little to see how many we can obtain of home manufacture. In my younger days I used sometimes to lecture; and I am willing to try my powers again if desired."

"I'll do my best," said Mr. Heath. "I suppose we are expected to give our services."

"Certainly, sir, and consider ourselves honored at that," replied Mr. Ware, laughing. "It will take all the money we can raise to pay speakers from abroad. May we expect a lecture from you, Mr. Austin? Some facts from your western experience would be very acceptable to us, if you are willing to give us the benefit of them."

"I shall be very glad to do so," was the answer. "I have some talks arranged."

"Then three lectures are secured," said Mr. Heath. "Now, you must go to the lawyers and see what they will do. Mr. Dunning can give us a rare treat if he will."

"He ought to speak upon temperance," responded Mr. Ware. "He *could* most effectually. I will ask him in regard to it."

The lawyer did not hesitate. He would be glad to speak upon the subject allotted to him,

and would use his influence to carry through the proposed entertainment successfully.

"I will endeavor to enlist the business men," he said. "It is always best to make sure at the outset, and we must have money. I am very busy; but I will take time to do my part."

If any one was indifferent, a few words from Mr. Dunning either banished the indifference or prompted to concealments, so that, what under the circumstances might be considered a very generous subscription, was received.

Some guessed there wouldn't many folks want to hear sermons in the Town Hall; but Mr. Ware, who opened the course, convinced them that ministers could "talk something besides sermons;" and those who were not present regretted their loss. The next week there was a larger audience when Mr. Heath redeemed the promise to do his best. Young

and old listened with delight; and after this there were no fears but the lectures would be sustained.

Mr. Austin provoked peals of laughter by his humorous descriptions, and sallies of wit; yet, with all these was mingled much of earnest teaching. He sketched the history of two men who left their eastern homes for the west, with only money enough to carry them to their place of destination. He made the listeners see their cabins, with rough walls and rude furniture. Built upon the same plan, and of the same dimensions, when new, they were wondrously alike; but as time went on, a marked difference was observable, even in their exterior. And this difference was caused by the fact that the owner of one cabin went to the Bible for wisdom, while his neighbor went to the whiskey-barrel.

The audience were profoundly moved; and the speaker hastened to complete his sketch,

which he did in so graphic a manner, that no one could fail to read the lesson.

"Well done, brother Austin!" exclaimed Mr. Ware. "Thank you for that good word; and will engage you for a second edition. I had no idea where you were going to land us, until we reached the shore."

Mr. Dunning was announced to lecture the following week and the hall was filled at an early hour. Many of those present had seen him in his days of darkness; and all knew the story of his life.

The occasion inspired him. He was looking his best as he rose to speak, and in a voice full of pathos uttered the single word "intemperance." A pause and then again he pronounced this word so fraught with terrible meaning. "Intemperance. The curse of our land and of the world."

As it would be impossible for me to do justice to what followed, I forbear the attempt.

The speaker testified to what he knew; although he made no pretence to relating his personal experience.

For more than an hour he held the audience spell bound. Old men wept, and young men trembled in view of the danger which threatened them. At the close of the lecture, comments were made in an under tone, while many gentlemen went forward to the platform and thanked their townsman for the words he had spoken.

Not all were pleased. There were some who, like Alfred Hanson, sneered at the fanaticism which waxed eloquent over the danger lurking in a glass of wine. They acknowledged neither the truth of the facts stated, or the conclusions drawn therefrom.

"Dunning will make himself very unpopular if he goes on in this way," said one wine drinker to another. I don't intend to hear any more such talk. It aint what I pay my money for."

"Don't be too fast, Burrill," was the reply. "Dunning won't receive a cent for his lecture, and I guess it aint best to find much fault. He ought to be posted in the matter, and it's always best to be on the safe side. I hope our young men will take warning."

"All Dunning says won't have any effect. It's only about six years since he was as miserable a drunkard as could be found; and now to think of his setting up to teach us our duty. I tell you he'll ruin his business this way."

Time proved Mr. Burrill a false prophet. The lecture produced a decided effect upon many of the young men who heard it, and Mark Dunning was more popular in his professional capacity than ever before. Those who differed from him in principles had unbounded confidence in his honor and ability.

"You'll need a partner soon," remarked one of his friends.

"I expect one," was the reply. "Arthur is coming into the office as soon as he is through college; and he has read so much law at different times that he will soon be admitted to practice. Then I shall have a reliable partner; and propose to take a little rest myself."

The whole family were looking forward impatiently to the time when Arthur should have completed his college course. Grace was at home enlivening the house with her presence, and realizing the fondest hopes of her parents. Equally fitted to shine in Mrs. Conant's old fashioned kitchen, or in the elegant parlors of her more fashionable friends, she was everywhere welcomed and admired.

Sympathizing with all who suffered and sorrowed, her heart was most deeply moved for those who were forced to bear the shame and poverty incurred by a drunken father. Having born this burden, the pressure of which

she could not yet quite forget, she knew how to pity others.

For one family, consisting of six children, her sympathies were especially enlisted. The eldest of these, a boy twelve years of age, was a member of her class in Sabbath School, and as brave a little fellow as one would wish to see. It mattered not what the weather might be, he was always in his place, eager to recite the lessons he had so thoroughly learned.

A stranger to Grace, when she first took charge of the class, she learned, upon enquiry, that his father had recently moved into town.

"A good mechanic, when he is sober, and a tiger, when he is drunk," was the description given of the father. "Seth is the only one who can do anything with him; and how he dares to try, is more than I know. It's a wonder how the family are fed or clothed. Seth works, whenever he can get a chance, and Mrs. Prescott is a wonderful manager. She

turns, and patches, and darns, so that every garment is made to do more than double duty."

"Where do they live?" asked Grace, her interest increasing.

"In the old house on Mink hill," was the reply.

"But that house was tumbling down, the last time I saw it."

"It looks very much like tumbling down now; though Prescott has patched it up, so it's quite comfortable for summer."

Soon after this, Grace Dunning went to Mink hill, and found the old house propped, patched and occupied. Before reaching the house, however, she made the acquaintance of some children, and sitting down with them enjoyed their merry prattle and artless ways.

"Won't you come and see mother?" asked the eldest of the group. "She'll be glad to see you. She's so lonesome she cries sometimes. Won't you come?"

"Come, pretty lady," lisped a wee bit of a girl. "Come, see mother. Father's gone."

"And where is brother Seth? I am his Sabbath School teacher."

"Oh, are you?" was the joyful exclamation. "He told us about you and he'll be so sorry he's gone. But perhaps he'll come back quick. He's. gone into the woods with his cart. The man said we might have the dry sticks to burn, and Seth says it will take a great deal for next winter."

Mrs. Prescott was mending an old garment when the children came toward the house with their visitor; one carrying a basket, while the other two held her fast by the hand.

"It's Seth's Sabbath School teacher," said Margaret.

"Miss Dunning, I am glad to see you," said a pale, tired-looking woman laying aside her work. "Seth has talked so much of his new teacher that I have felt almost acquainted with you."

"And I have been so much interested in him, that I improved the first opportunity to call upon him."

"I am very sorry he is not at home to see you. You have taken a long walk."

"It did not seem very long," replied Grace. "I think I walked rapidly however, and am a little tired. I took a book and some lunch with me, intending to rest by the way; but I walked straight on."

"You can rest here now," said one of the children.

"Yes, so I can; and that will be pleasanter than resting by the way."

To Mrs. Prescott the sight of a happy face was a great pleasure; and feeling almost acquainted with her guest, they chatted for an hour very socially.

"I asked Seth to bring his sisters to school," remarked the young lady.

"He told us and I wish they could go,"

replied Mrs. Prescott. "They would like it very much, too; but I can't manage to fit them out quite yet. I hope they can go another year."

"Brother Seth has Sabbath School after he comes home," said Margaret. "We say lessons just as he does, and he talks what you tell him and reads to us. He sings, too, and we sing with him. It's nice, but it would be nicer if we could go where the other children do."

Grace knew how sensitive this poor mother must be, yet she ventured to express the wish that she might be permitted to assist in clothing the children. "We have some outgrown garments at home, which we have been wishing to make useful," she said. "We shall be very glad if you will accept them," and thus delicately offered, Mrs. Prescott could not refuse the charity.

"Seth is coming," exclaimed one of the

girls, and directly she had told her brother that his Sabbath School teacher was waiting to see him.

"Why, you don't say Miss Dunning is here," was the boy's reply.

"Yes, she is," said Margaret. "She's been here a good while; and mother looks as happy as can be. Come right in, and see her."

"Looking as I do now? No, indeed. I've got some washing to do first."

The washing made him presentable, and his face was all aglow with pleasure, when his teacher shook hands with him.

"So you are getting in your winter's supply of wood," she said.

"Trying to do a little towards it," was the modest reply. "Mother likes dry wood, and Mr. Little wants it picked up; so I help them both, when I don't have other work to do."

"That is right. Do anything that is hon-

est, rather than be idle. I should have known that you were an industrious boy, by the way your lessons are learned. And you have a Sabbath School here at home, too."

"Not much of one," answered Seth, with a blush. "I try to help my sisters a little, and they can learn lessons."

"Yes, they have told me about it, and I think it is a very nice plan. I should like to come to your Sabbath School, myself."

At this, all the children laughed, and the last vestige of restraint was banished.

In all that had been said, the father's name was not mentioned; and well could Grace understand the silence. Those whom death makes orphans can still speak of him whose love once blessed them; but to those who are worse than orphaned, by intemperance, is granted no such boon.

Seth was in a state of delight, when Miss Dunning went to look at his wood pile, and

listened with interest to his plans for increasing its size.

"It's an old place here. If I was a man, I'd have a good house, with nice things in it," said the boy.

"When you are a man, I expect you will be a very good one," replied his teacher.

"I shall try," was the answer. "I want to be such a man, that mother will be proud of me."

"I have no doubt you will. You are beginning in the right way, and I shall be very glad to help you, if I can."

"Why, you have helped me, Miss Dunning. You say just the right things to me Sundays; and I come home feeling as though I could do almost anything. There's one thing, though, I can't do," he added, after some hesitation.

"What is it?" asked Grace, laying her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"I don't know as I ought to say," he answered. "I want to tell you, though."

"Then tell me; and you may be sure I can keep it a secret, if you wish."

"I want to make father stop drinking," was sobbed forth. "If you would only help me do that, I should be so glad."

"I will try, Seth. I don't know exactly how, but I shall try, in some way. What shall you do, to-morrow?"

"Go into the woods again, I suppose, when I have mended my cart. I broke it, this afternoon."

"Can you find time to come to our house, some time during the day?"

"Oh, yes, if you want me to," answered the boy, with sparkling eyes. "I know where it is."

"Then come down as early in the morning as you please; and perhaps I shall find some work for you to do."

"I should like that," was the reply. "I want to earn some money."

Grace went again into the house, said a few encouraging words to Mrs. Prescott, and took her basket. "Why, here is my lunch, now," she remarked, smiling. "I don't feel willing to carry it over the road twice; so if these children will allow me, I will give it to them."

It was evident the gift would be appreciated, although only Margaret said, "Thank you, Miss Dunning." No sooner, however, was Grace well out of hearing than one of the younger children exclaimed, "She must been awful hungry to want so much just for lunch."

"Brother Seth must have a cake, 'cause she's his teacher," and away ran 'Tot' with the largest cake she could grasp.

Seth was hammering at his cart, hungry enough to eat even a dry piece of bread, yet he did not touch the cake offered by his sister.

"Eat it," she urged. "It's real nice."

"Don't doubt it," was the reply. "But

then you see I'm busy. Must get this cart ready for my next journey."

Margaret next appeared, and after looking admiringly at her brother as he worked said, "This has been a good day."

"Yes, so it has," answered Seth. "But I expect to-morrow will be better. I'm going to Miss Dunning's house."

"I wish I was going, too," rejoined the sister. "I wish Miss Dunning had asked me."

Miss Dunning, herself, wished the same thing. She was anxious that her mother should see the whole family. "I know you would like them," she said.

"I am sure I should *sympathize* with them," was the response. I will do what I can to help them ; and when I have seen Seth, I can judge better how help should be given."

Seth had been told to come early, and as his ideas of time were somewhat in advance

of most people, he presented himself at Mr. Dunning's while the family were at breakfast.

"That speaks well for him," said the lawyer. "I think I'll talk with him a little."

The boy made friends of all. Barton thought him quite a wonder; especially after a confidential chat in which there were some mutual revelations of personal experience.

"I should like to come up and see you some day, Seth."

"I wish you would," replied the visitor. "Perhaps, though, you wouldn't like it. It's an awful old house and old things in it;" but of course Barton didn't care for that, unless the description may have made him all the more anxious to visit his new friend.

Easier coming down hill than going up as Seth found; for what with a large bundle and a somewhat heavy basket he made slow progress, although at the outset he had been quite sure he could carry them just as well as not.

"There, mother, see what I've brought," he exclaimed as soon as he entered the house. "Mrs. Dunning sent them, and I'm going to work; and you shall have some *new* things besides."

After this, means were found to reach Mr. Prescott, so that he was induced to give up the use of intoxicating drink for a certain length of time; and the allotted term of abstinence had nearly expired when Mark Dunning delivered his lecture upon intemperance.

"Mr. Prescott, I am very glad to see you here," said the lawyer, when from the crowd which gathered round him a hard, rough hand was extended to grasp his own.

"I'm glad to be here," was the reply. "And I'm glad you've told us the truth without keeping back any of it. It's done me good. Perhaps you'll know how much, sometime."

After this what mattered the criticism of

wine drinkers or rumsellers? The good which had been accomplished far outweighed all other considerations.

CHAPTER VI.

Temptation's hour; —
It comes at length,
To test the power
Of human strength.

TEN years since that wild November night, when Alfred Hanson heard himself denounced as traitor and villain. Yet even now, the terrible words seemed ringing in his ears, as, sitting with bowed head, he forgot the present, in the past.

But forgetfulness could not be long. Present interests demanded immediate attention; and, indeed, it was this very demand which sent his thoughts back to the past. A letter, directed to his wife, and written by his son,

lay upon the table before him. Walter had asked for money.

"Don't let father see this; and don't tell him that I want money. He always blames me, and so does Flo. I know you can get it, just as you have before, and I will be more careful about spending."

Thus read the letter; and but for Mrs. Hanson's absence from home, the secret would have been carefully guarded.

Better even than money or position did this father love his son. Affection and pride were both deeply wounded. True, he had often blamed Walter; yet through all, he could not believe his boy guilty of more than youthful indiscretions, which time would cure. Now, he was convinced otherwise.

He deliberated as to what should be done. To wait for his wife's return, and appeal to her for an account of the money she had already sent, was the first plan which sug-

gested itself, only to be rejected, as he well knew she would screen Walter, at any sacrifice. Perhaps Flora could give some information. Mr. Hanson summoned her, and in an abrupt manner, asked how long since she had heard from Walter.

"He never writes to me," was the reply.

"He writes to your mother."

"Yes, sir. But I never see the letters, and she doesn't tell me anything he writes."

"How much money have you left of your last quarter's allowance?"

Flora blushed as this question was asked, thus increasing her father's suspicion; and as she hesitated to reply, the question was repeated in a somewhat different form.

"I haven't much," she said.

"How much?"

Always truthful, she answered, "I have a little more than a dollar."

"Do you mean to say that is all the money you have?"

"Yes, sir," and now she looked her father full in the face.

"And it is only a month since I gave you what you said was sufficient for three. I don't understand how you can have spent so much. How is it?"

"I wish you would excuse me from telling you, father. I shall not ask for any more."

"Do you expect to get through the next two months with only a dollar?"

"Yes, sir."

"I hardly think I shall allow you to do that," said Mr. Hanson, giving his daughter a small roll of bills. "Now I must insist upon your telling me how you spent your money. I have a particular reason for wishing to know."

"I didn't spend it," she answered, letting the roll of bills fall from her hand. "I loaned it."

"To whom?"

"To mother."

"Have you ever loaned money to her before?"

"Yes, sir, several times."

"And has she repaid you?"

"No, sir. But please don't tell her. I don't care for the money, and I don't wish you to give me any more."

"I don't choose to have you penniless," was the only reply vouchsafed to this. "Take those bills, and never loan money again, while I provide for you."

Poor Flora left the library with a heavy heart. She could not have refused to answer her father's questions; yet answering them might involve her in a world of trouble. And it was all for Walter. He was not truthful and honorable. She had learned that by bitter experience, and she feared he was even worse than he seemed.

She met her father at the tea table; but he made no allusion to what had passed between

them in the library. Only that he ate less than usual, and wore a more forbidding frown, there was no change in his appearance.

"Do you expect to hear from your mother while she is gone?" he asked, as he was leaving the room.

"No, sir," she replied. "Mother never writes to me."

"Well, good night. I am going away early in the morning and may not be back for several days. I have some business to attend to."

Flora could only wonder and wait. The next day she received a note from her mother containing the injunction, "If a letter comes to me from Walter, let no one see it. Burn it, and say nothing about it. I have seen Walter, and he says he has written to me. I shall be at home next week."

Meanwhile, Mr. Hanson saw his son, and learned some facts which proved his worst

fears true. He read aloud the letter which had been written to a foolish mother, and intended for no eye but hers.

"You see now it is of no use to deny anything," said the father. "Tell me how much money your mother has sent you."

"I don't know," was the reply.

"Don't know!" repeated Mr. Hanson, sternly. "Tell me at once, or I shall find other means of discovering the truth. We must have a fair settlement now. Somebody here knows how you have spent money."

"I've only done as others do," said the boy in a deprecating tone. "I didn't mean to spend so much money."

"It isn't the money I care for, Walter. I can pay that. But you are forming habits which will injure you through your whole life. I want you to be a prosperous, honorable man. I am growing old, and I depend a great deal upon you. You have disappointed and mortified me."

The young man had been a little moved by his father's expression of solicitude; but when the old, hard tone was resumed, his heart rebelled, and he resolved not to acknowledge his short comings.

This resolution, however, was of no avail. He found himself where confession was the only means of avoiding public disgrace; yet, even then, he was not frank and truthful as he should have been.

"Tell me how much will pay your whole indebtedness," said the father. "I have come prepared to settle every bill."

After some calculation, Walter named a sum which he said would be amply sufficient to pay every cent he owed; and Mr. Hanson counted out the money.

"Now go out and pay your bills, and then come back to me. I have something more to say to you."

Walter did as directed, returning with re-

ceipted bills which his father carefully preserved. Then there was a long evening before them from which neither could anticipate much pleasure.

I should do Mr. Hanson the justice to say, that he really wished to impress his son with the necessity of uprightness and temperance in all things. Unfortunately, however, the young man had formed a very correct estimate of his father's character; and while appearing to listen with respect, was, in reality, considering how he should manage to deceive "the governor," when out of the way. Precept must be enforced by example. To talk of uprightness was one thing, to practice it, quite another.

In the morning, after an interview with the Principal of the school, Mr. Hanson again spoke to his son, if possible, more decidedly than before.

"Don't let me hear any further complaints

of you," he said. "I can't have people say that my son behaves in a manner unbecoming a gentleman. Your old schoolmate, Barton Dunning, will come out a great ways ahead of you, if you are not careful."

"He always was ahead of me every way," was the reply.

"There is no reason why he should be," rejoined the father, anxious to rouse his son's ambition, by comparing him with others. "Barton has no better abilities than you. He is going to be a farmer, too, and we don't expect quite so much of farmers as we do of merchants and professional men."

"If I was Barton, I wouldn't be a farmer," said Walter, quickly. "He could be just as smart as Arthur, and I don't see what he's thinking of, to settle down and dig in the dirt. He's a good fellow, though, anywhere, and he's got the pleasantest home I know of."

"You don't think it's as pleasant as The Oaks, do you, Walter?"

"I don't know," was the careless answer. "I was thinking of the inside of his home. Ours is a nice place, though. Everybody says that, and I'm proud of living there."

"Then make yourself worthy of being its owner. Don't disappoint me."

Mrs. Hanson reached home sooner than was expected. Her anxiety in regard to Walter's letter, and her desire to comply with his request, induced her to shorten her absence. As no letter had been seen, she was obliged to wait for an explanation, until her husband's return.

Then there was a stormy interview; harsh reproach on one side, and bitter complaints on the other; stern demands of full confession, and weak dissembling. At last, Mrs. Hanson had recourse to tears; and in her confusion, attempted to throw some blame upon Flora, when, for once, her husband asserted the rights of his daughter.

"Flora jealous of Walter!" he exclaimed, repeating her accusation. "Why should she be? She is an elegant young lady, and a good scholar. No one except you has ever complained of her; and I am afraid the poor girl has not been very happy at home. She has always given up to Walter, in everything, and I shall see that she has justice done her in future."

Well might the lady look up in astonishment, at this strange outburst, so strange that she could think of no reply.

"Another thing," her husband continued, "Flora is not to be blamed for any part of this affair. She knows nothing about the letter received while you were away; and I charge you not to speak of it. There is no reason why she should be troubled, because Walter does wrong."

This charge was regarded; yet Flora could not avoid feeling troubled, whenever she

thought of her brother. She always prayed for him, and while with him, sought in every possible way to do him good.

"I am tired of school," he said to her, in a fretful tone, the first day he was at home for a vacation. "It's nothing but study, from one week's beginning to another, until I wish there wasn't a book in the world. I never was made for a scholar. I want to go into a large store, where there is something going on. Father's always harping about a profession. It's no use, though. I won't stay in school much longer, to please anybody."

"Don't talk so, Walter," replied his sister, gently. "You ought to do as father wishes to have you, and you should have a good education, whether you study a profession or not."

"Don't harp on that string any more," was the impatient response. "A good deal girls know about such things. I tell you I'm going

to be a merchant, and live in the city. Bart Dunning may settle down in this one horse place, if he wants to. I shan't. Don't you get tired of it yourself, Flo?" he asked, in a softer tone. "I really believe you've grown thin and pale, since I was at home before, and I presume it all comes of staying here. Miserable hole, any way!'

"How can you talk so of our pleasant home, Walter?"

"Pshaw! How can I? Easy enough. I'm only telling the truth, and you know it."

"You used to think The Oaks a nice place, brother."

"So I did, and so I do now," was the reply. "I'm talking about this town. But I must be off. By the way, Flo, I wish you would loan me five dollars for a day or two. I'm a little short of change just now."

"I will *give* you five dollars," she answered going from the room, and returning directly with the money.

Loaning or giving was all the same to him who received it; as he would never think of repaying in either case. Going out he encountered Barton Dunning, walking briskly, with quite the air of a business man. "Ah, Barton, how are you?" he exclaimed.

"Well, always well," was the hearty reply. "Such a day as this sends the blood through my veins in double quick time; and I hope you are enjoying the same blessing, as people sometimes write. This is a brave, old world, isn't it?"

"I begin to think it is, since I've seen you, though, ten minutes ago I was ready to say all manner of bad things about it."

"How could you do that, Walter? I feel like shouting, just because I'm here."

"Whew! was the responsive ejaculation. "Let me get a good look at you so I may be sure it's really my old schoolmate. You used to be a quiet sort of a fellow; but you grow

so fast no wonder you feel like shouting. Where are you going to stop ?"

"Don't know. Come over and see us some evening, and I'll tell you my impression on the subject."

"And that's Bart Dunning is it," said Walter to a mutual acquaintance a moment after.

"It appears to be," was the laughing answer.

"So I think. But he's changed the most of anybody I ever saw. He's got on an extra amount of steam some way. What's up ?"

"Nothing new. He's the smartest fellow in town, any way. Beats his brother all out, and will beat his father if he lives long enough. I suppose you know his father has bought a farm, and Bart is going to carry it on."

"Fool for doing that," replied Walter. "No need of his digging in the dirt. He can have his choice, and so can I."

Flora Hanson and her brother spent an evening at Mr. Dunning's; the latter coming away with a stronger impression than before, that it was the pleasantest home he had ever seen.

"Flo, don't you wish our father and mother were like Mr. and Mrs. Dunning?" he asked, so soon as they were out of the house.

"What a strange question!" she answered, evasively.

"Perhaps it is; but I could say yes to it. I should be better than I am now, if other folks were different."

"You can be good now, if you will. O Walter, I think about you so much, and I am so anxious you should be a noble man."

"Well, well, Flo, don't preach. "Don't worry, either. I guess I shall turn out all right."

There were rumors that Grace Dunning would soon be married to a classmate of her

brother; while in regard to the matrimonial prospects of the brother himself, there was much curiosity. He seemed wholly absorbed in his profession; yet no one who understood his warm, affectionate nature, believed this could satisfy him. Respectful, courteous and gallant, he held the even tenor of his way, unheeding comment or gossip.

His father depended upon him, trusted his judgment and knowledge, and was wont to call him "a strong tower." Arthur, in return, was proud of the father, whose brilliant talents, elegant manners, and unswerving integrity, made him conspicuous, wherever he might be.

He was popular, and the political party, of which he was a member, looking for a man who would represent their interests in Congress, and command the largest number of votes in the district, selected him as best suited to their purpose. He was visited and assured of the nomination.

"Of course you will accept," said one of his friends. "Congress is just the place for you, and your constituents will have reason to be proud of you."

Mark Dunning was ambitious. When a boy, he had dreamed of sitting among the honored of the nation; and now he might realize this dream. His voice should be heard in the halls of Congress, always for the right. What might he not accomplish? The whole world seemed spread out before him, that he might choose from its glorious gifts, to crown his life. Mingled, too, with this bright vision, were glimpses of the past, and he who gazed was only human;—it would be such a triumph to honor the name he bore, as none other had honored it.

His pulse quickened, and he longed to be alone, that he might give free rein to his fancy. Yet there sat his friends, waiting for an answer; and when given, so well modu-

lated was his voice, that not one divined the tumult within his breast. He expressed his appreciation of the honor they would do him, and tendered his thanks; but he must take time for consideration, before consenting to be publicly nominated for the office in question.

"Time for consideration, Dunning! What do you mean by that?" was the surprised rejoinder. "Why, man, I thought anybody would accept such a nomination, at sight. I'm disappointed in you. I thought you'd come to the front, gladly."

"So I would," replied Mr. Dunning. "I am not insensible to the honor. But I must take time to think of it."

"How long?"

"Two days."

"Well, honors improve by keeping, the same as good wine; so we shall count on you, sure."

Arthur was not in the office, and after his

friends left, the lawyer had a half hour to himself; but he was forced to confess that only one side of the question had been considered. He would consult his wife and children; not, perhaps, that he should be governed by their decision, but that he might himself decide more wisely.

Mrs. Dunning listened patiently, interrupting no one of his enthusiastic remarks.

"Have you decided to accept the nomination?" she asked, as he paused for a reply.

"No, my dear, I would not do that, before talking with you. Yet I confess, Grace, that it stirs my blood, only to think of it."

"And you would like to go to Washington, as representative from this district?"

"Indeed I should," he replied, with the utmost frankness. "I was an ambitious boy, and I am beginning to think that fifty years of life has intensified my ambition. Wouldn't you like to spend a season in Washington yourself?"

"I am not anxious in regard to it," she answered, with a smile. "Let us talk of something else, now."

It was useless to think of this, however. One subject engrossed the attention of Mark Dunning, to the exclusion of all others.

"Arthur can attend to business here," he said. "It will give him an opportunity to try his powers, unaided; and he needs just that discipline."

"And do you, Mark, need the discipline of a sojourn in Washington?"

"Yes, he replied, a little impatiently. "There, I can measure myself with others, and learn of what manner of man I am."

Mrs. Dunning was silent. Arthur came in, looking grave and abstracted.

"Anything wrong, my son?"

"Nothing wrong, so far as business is concerned," was the reply.

"I am glad to hear that. I should be

sorry to have any business trouble, just now."

"Why just now?"

"Because I have other things to think of."

Arthur knew to what reference was made; but choosing to conceal this knowledge, waited for his father to speak more plainly.

Conversation revealed the fact that there was no thought of declining the honor which had been proffered.

"What do you think of it, Arthur? Can you look after matters here?"

"I should do my best, if left in charge of them," the son answered, in a constrained voice.

Just then, one of the leading politicians of the town called to express his views, and desired to see the lawyer alone. There was to be an exciting campaign. The candidate of the opposing party was a strong man.

"We expect to fight hard," said the politician, in his interview with Mark Dunning.

"But we're sure of success, with you for a leader. Some of us have had you in mind through all the last four years; and now, everything looks fair. There's no doubt about your acceptance, I suppose. We want to have a preliminary meeting to-morrow evening, and talk the thing up; see how we stand, and all that. You understand. There'll be a dozen gentlemen present, more or less; and we shall expect a decided acceptance from you. We can carry your nomination in convention, and then speeches and interviews must follow."

There was no dissent from this; and the next evening, a dozen gentlemen were seated in a private room in the hotel, with every appearance of being comfortable.

Mr. Dunning was late; and when he entered, it was observed that his face was flushed, and his whole manner in striking contrast with the usual calm demeanor which

characterized him. He was acting against the strongly expressed wishes of his family. But he soon forgot this, and talked with animation of the various interests discussed.

"I know you have the reputation of being a tee-totaler, Dunning; but I suppose you won't object if the rest of us drink to your success," said one of the gentlemen, while another made some remark, which, for the moment, claimed attention.

Wine was brought, and its fumes filled the room, while glasses clinked, and good wishes were expressed. "Here's a glass for our honorable nominee."

Mark Dunning reached forth his hand. He endeavored to make some apology for following the example of his companions; but his lips uttered no sound. Excited, maddened, he raised the glass, and drained it to the last drop.

At that moment, he felt within him two

forces, contending for the mastery; and the very fierceness of the struggle held his brain in abeyance. Horrified at what he had done, pride, will, and conscience were arrayed against the fierce thirst, which a partial indulgence had increased.

Yet those who looked upon him saw nothing of all this. They fancied he had, for this one occasion, broken his rule of abstinence; and one was about to make a remark to that effect, when the glass he had drained was shivered to atoms.

"Gentlemen" — Like a wail of agony, this smote upon every listener — "I cannot accept the nomination you have tendered me. I have gone back ten years of my life. I do not blame you; but if I am again a drunkard, it will because I met you here this evening. I dared to think I was strong. I have learned that I am weak."

"Take away the wine," was said, in a low tone, and the table was cleared at once.

"You don't mean that you are going to desert us, now, and let this opportunity for yourself go by," one at length found voice to say.

"I mean all I have said, and more," was the reply. "You must find a candidate for office elsewhere;" and before remonstrance could be made, the speaker had left the room.

In the hall he paused for a moment, irresolute; then raising his hands, as if in prayer, hastened down the steps, into the street.

How could he meet his wife and children! Oh, the dark, terrible thoughts which assailed him! Honor and distinction were now of little worth. His dream had passed.

Burdened well nigh to fainting, he staggered on, each step bringing him nearer home. He stood by the gate, leaning against one of its supports, wondering how he should reveal the shame which had come to him. He was conscious of a vague feeling of insecurity and weakness, like what he had known in former

years; then all was a blank, until he found himself lying upon a lounge, in the family sitting-room.

"Go for the doctor," Grace was saying in an anxious tone. "Father will die. I know he will."

"Shall I go?" asked Barton.

"No," answered his brother. "We can do all that is necessary. Mother, please sit down and leave father to me."

Mrs. Dunning could not but yield to this request. Sinking into a chair she covered her face and wept aloud.

"Mother, mother, don't give way so," cried Arthur. "We must be calm."

The prostrate man heard this, and suffered the keenest agony, even while unable to give any token of his consciousness.

"Has father been drinking again?" asked Barton, hurriedly.

"I am afraid so," answered Arthur.

"Then I should like to die this minute," said the younger brother. "I don't want to live and have a drunkard for a father."

"You had better leave the room," was the only reply made to this.

The door was opened and closed, then again; and only the mother remained with her eldest son. "It must be as Barton suspects," she said. "I feared it; but he would not listen to me. God help us, for mortal arm has failed."

During this time the son had not relaxed his efforts for the relief of his father; and soon the words were whispered, "Don't judge me until you have heard all."

Mrs. Dunning sprang to her husband, and Arthur went out to return when summoned, after the lapse of a few minutes.

"I am going to stay with you now," said his father. "I am sorry I did not take your advice; but the old must sometimes learn by

experience as well as the young, and I have learned my lesson. Call Grace and Barton. I wish you all to hear what I have to say."

In a few words the events of the evening were recounted. "Now, can you forgive me?" he asked, sadly, looking around upon those he loved.

For reply, Grace threw herself into his arms; Barton leaned upon his shoulder; while Arthur, feeling none the less, clasped his hand.

Prayer closed the evening, giving promise of good; yet the next morning, greetings were exchanged in a subdued tone, and pale faces gathered round the table. Arthur waited to walk to the office with his father; and when there they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of public life, frankly.

"It is not for me," said Mr. Dunning. "I know it, now; and it was better that I should meet temptation and fall at once, than be led

on step by step. My punishment is great, but I thank God, my son, that nothing bars your way. I might hope to rise, if——"

"Father!"

"I know all you would say, Arthur. Much is given me, yet there is more within my reach which I dare not grasp. You will never know the shame and wretchedness I feel."

It was not easy to commence work that morning. Physically and mentally, Mark Dunning was wholly unfitted for it. Despite his prayers and efforts at self control, a spirit of recklessness half mastered him. More than once in the past he had said that to drink one glass of wine would make his ruin sure; and now it required almost superhuman efforts to prove this prediction false. Often, during those morning hours, he retired to an inner room that he might be alone with God.

In the afternoon two of the gentlemen

whom he had met the previous evening called, and ignoring what had then transpired asked for his decision.

"I have not changed my mind," he answered, seriously. "Much as I am flattered by the preference you have expressed, I cannot take advantage of it. You would have reason to regret my acceptance."

"We are willing to run all risks of that," was the response. "Leave that part to us, and allow us to give you the nomination."

"No, gentlemen, I cannot do it. You know my weakness."

"We know your strength," interrupted one. "You can command more votes than any other man in the district, and you owe it to your party to come forward."

"I cannot do it," said Mr. Dunning. "Command me in any other way and I am at your service."

Much more was said; but all did not shake

the lawyer's resolution. People were astonished at so strange an event. That a man would decline an honorable position for which he was eminently fitted, was beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. A mutual pledge made by those present when he yielded to temptation, bound them to secrecy; while regard for his family sealed his own lips.

One, every way his inferior was nominated in convention, and by the usual appliances was elected. Mark Dunning made many brilliant speeches during the campaign; often eliciting the remarks, "He's the man to send to Congress. We'll have him next time."

Barton, who had been quite crushed by his father's misfortune, was beginning to feel again that life was of some value; and made preparations for a vigorous spring's work. His farm was to be a model, and his crops the best of their kind.

"I expect you would like some money to start with," said his father.

"Yes, sir, if you please to loan it to me," was the reply. "I intend to pay my way, and shall return every dollar of it."

"Don't be too sure, my son."

"Well, if I can't pay my way farming, I'll try something else. I can't live on a sixpence either, unless it is necessary, and it won't be as long as I have hands and feet, with steam enough to keep them moving."

"Our farmer will be an honor to the family," remarked Grace, laughing.

"Yes, miss, and a farmer will be needed among so many lawyers. You will all be glad to visit me, and drink of milk and honey."

"So we shall, Barty. I've no doubt you will have the richest milk, and the sweetest honey, and the most generous heart, of any farmer in New England. What did I hear you say about Walter Hanson?" asked Grace, when her brother returned to the room, after a short absence.

"I said he was at home."

"It is not time for vacation."

"No, Walter says he is tired of school; but it is my opinion that school is tired of him. He looks like a hard boy."

"That is what troubles Flora. I knew something was wrong, the last time I saw her. She hardly smiled, except when we met."

"I shouldn't think she would smile," said Barton. "I'm glad Mr. Hanson isn't *my* father, if he does live at The Oaks."

"And what does Walter propose to do now?"

"Go to the city. He don't intend to dig for a living. He will be a merchant. There, now, I wonder what is the subject of Arthur's brown study," added Barton, abruptly, pointing to his brother, who was coming slowly up the walk. "You may always count on something, when he looks like that; and I, for one, should like to know what that something is.

It's of no use to ask, though. I've learned that, by experience. But Arthur is a splendid fellow, if he does keep his own secrets."

"How do you know he has any to keep?"

"I judge him by others;" and away went the speaker, to look after his pet horse, and guard whatever secrets so young a man might have.

Grace was anxious for her friend, and under the influence of what she was pleased to call a selfish sympathy, decided to invite Flora to spend the next day with her. "Come early, and give me the whole day," she wrote.

Barton was the bearer of this note, and as was expected, brought back an acceptance of the invitation. "I told her she ought to come before breakfast," he said.

"And did she agree with you?" asked Grace.

"She didn't *dis*agree with me," was the reply. "I am going for her with my new

wagon, and you may expect her bright and early. I suppose Arthur will envy me; but I can't help it."

"Did you see Walter?"

"No, he has gone away somewhere; and Flora looked as though she had been crying. If she was my sister, I should paint her cheeks."

"That would spoil her, entirely," said Mr. Dunning.

"I guess you won't think so, when you see how pale she is," Barton replied.

"I suppose Walter will spend the evening here," remarked Arthur.

"No, he is not expected back for several days, and I promised to see Flora safe home. So, Mr. Lawyer, you will not be troubled."

Not even Grace expected company to breakfast until she saw her brother drive out of the yard next morning; and then she was not quite sure until shortly after when he appeared with Flora.

"Shall I be welcome so early?" asked the young lady, as her friend came out to meet her.

"You are welcome at any time," was the reply.

"I told you so," said Barton, laughing. "Such a ride every morning would do you good; and, excuse me, Miss Hanson, but it would improve your looks. You need a little more color."

In the house, the atmosphere which surrounded her made Flora appear at her best, although when the flush had faded from her cheek, no one could fail to observe that she was very pale.

"How good it seems to be with you," she said when alone with Grace. "You rest me, and I am tired this spring."

"You study too much," replied her friend.

"No, my dear, I need study. I need it to occupy my thoughts. Mother is wholly ab-

sorbed in Walter, and father attends to business; while poor I must depend upon myself."

"Depend upon me to-day, Flora. I am glad to have you here, and if I can help you in any way don't hesitate to tell me. I am anxious about you. You are not looking well. You should consult our good doctor."

"He consulted me a few days ago," was the smiling reply.

"And what was prescribed?"

"Out of door exercise and cheerful thoughts. O Grace, your brothers are so good you never need be anxious about them. Think what it would be if you were haunted by the fear that they would do some terrible thing. Such a fear for Walter is what tires me and makes life almost a burden," she added, while tears sprang to her eyes.

For the moment Grace could only weep; but presently she said, "Walter may be better than you think. He is young, and it may

be from thoughtlessness that he does what troubles you. You must try to influence him."

"But I can have no influence over him. He does not seem to care for me. If he did I should cherish some hope. I must not tell even you how bad it is. Forgive me for having troubled you, and let us be happy this one day."

Mrs. Dunning's entrance changed the tone of conversation, and soon Flora was occupied with a piece of new music; and after this no allusion was made to Walter throughout the entire day.

"How many days we have spent together," said Grace, as the twilight drew near.

"Yes, so many happy days. And what shall I do when you are gone?"

"Come and see me."

"So I will, but ——"

"No buts, Flora. Look on the bright side."

"To whom is that command?" asked Arthur, entering the room.

"For yourself, if you need it," answered Grace, laughing. "I thought you went to the office."

"I went, and returned to spend the evening with the ladies, if my company would be agreeable."

"That depends, —" rejoined his sister.

"Upon what?" asked the young gentleman.

"Upon your mood. If you are entertaining, stay, if gloomy, go."

"Flora, I appeal to you. Shall I go or stay?"

"Stay," replied Flora, lightly. "That is what I should say, if you were my brother."

"And what you *have* said, as I am *not* your brother, I shall take advantage of your permission."

Barton came in, and without leave, asked

or granted, seated himself near their guest, and contributed his share to her entertainment. At the close of the evening, however, he complained of ill treatment. Arthur claimed the privilege of escorting Flora home, and in consideration of superior age, this was granted.

"On one condition," said the younger brother. "Miss Flora Dunning must ride with me, before the week closes."

"I shall be very happy to ride with you at any time," was the laughing reply. "I will give you a standing invitation to come for me, whenever you please."

"Thank you, and be sure I shall avail myself of your invitation. My horse and wagon are at your service, Mr. Lawyer; and more, I will do duty as hostler. I don't intend to show any ill nature, because you have superseded me."

They parted merrily, Flora looking back to

assure "the hostler" that she would not forget her promise.

"Are you in haste to reach home?" asked Arthur, after he had driven a short distance.

"There is no reason why I should be," replied his companion.

"Then we will go round the square, if you please. Once, this evening, you told me to stay; tell me now to go."

"Go," said Flora, softly, so softly that the horse did not hear; but no one cared for that.

It was only two miles round the square; a short drive, which might be accomplished in few minutes. Had Barton held the reins, it would have been a quick dash; but Arthur was not ambitious to display his skill in fast driving. He had a story to tell; that old story, which, however much it may be embellished, is comprehended in the single sentence, "I love you."

In the blushing face and downcast eyes of her who listened, he read the sweet confirma-

tion of his hopes, which he afterwards heard, in low murmured words. Almost unconsciously to herself, Flora Hanson had loved Arthur Dunning, since she was a child. She knew this now, although she had before fancied that she thought of him only as a common friend. She might have wondered at the late avowal of love, on his part, had he not frankly explained why it had been delayed. His first duty was to his parents.

"So long ago as I was capable of realizing my father's unfortunate condition, I resolved to save him, if it was possible; and if not, to devote myself to my family. I would form no new ties, so long as there was a necessity for me at home. I have done what I considered my duty, and now" — The conclusion of this sentence may be imagined, when I assure my readers that it was not only fitting and proper, but one which the select audience could fully appreciate.

"To-morrow, I shall see your father," said

Arthur, as he parted from Flora. "Until then, good-bye."

"Been spending the day out?" asked Mr. Hanson, when his daughter came into the room where he was sitting.

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"At Mr. Dunning's."

"And I have wanted you," chimed in Mrs. Hanson. "Your father says Walter is going to the city, and there is a great deal to be done to put his clothes in order. I believe you would rather stay with those Dunnings, than be at home, any time."

"There are enough to attend to Walter's clothing, without calling upon Flora," said her father, coldly. "She is not looking well, this spring."

"How can you say that, when her cheeks are rosy as a milk maid's? Just look at her," and now that she was the object of marked attention, Flora's cheeks had a deeper

color. "Who came home with you?" continued her mother.

"Arthur Dunning."

"But I thought Barton was your gallant."

"He came for me, this morning."

"Yes, looking like a farmer," said the lady, in querulous tones.

"Did he?" asked Flora. "I didn't observe anything peculiar in his looks."

"Of course you didn't. His name is Dunning."

"I have heard worse names than that," remarked Mr. Hanson, moved by a spirit of contradiction. "You forget that we are indebted to one of that name, for Walter's life."

"I am told of it often enough to remember."

At this point, the daughter made her escape, and in the solitude of her own room, reviewed the events of the evening.

The next morning, the proprietor of The Oaks received an early call from Arthur Dun-

ning, who, in a manly way, made known his business.

"This is a great surprise to me," said the father, in a tone which confirmed his words. "I had other plans. But I will make no objections to your marriage with Flora," he added, after a silence, which seemed almost interminable to his companion. "You are worthy of her, and I wish you happiness. Perhaps you would like to see her."

"Thank you, I should."

It would be difficult to describe Mr. Hanson's feelings when he had time for consideration. Surprised, gratified, and yet half regretting what had occurred, he fully realized the awkward position in which he would be placed as father-in-law to Mark Dunning's son. But Flora had chosen for herself; and there were many reasons why he would not object to her choice.

For Mr. and Mrs. Dunning, the new ar-

rangement was even more awkward than for others; yet when Arthur, in the most delicate manner, revealed the motives which had actuated him in the past, and the hopes he now cherished, they could not find it in their hearts to express one regret.

The engagement was a surprise to the entire community, although people wondered they had not thought of it before. There were the usual comments, with some talk about the property, which might, after all, go back into the family where it belonged.

"A Dunning may live at The Oaks, yet," said Mrs. Conant. "Alfred Hanson ought to thank Arthur Dunning for doing him the honor to marry his daughter; though Flora's a good girl, and deserves a good husband. It's strange how things come round."

Walter could hardly find words to express his astonishment. "Whew! Arthur going to marry *you!*" he exclaimed, turning to his sister. "It's more than I expected."

CHAPTER VII.

Another life resigned too soon,
Another sun gone down at noon.

SOON after the engagement of the young people, Mr. and Mrs. Hanson called at Mark Dunning's cottage, the gentleman wearing his blandest manners. Knowing that he was in the presence of his superiors, he comported himself accordingly. The time for condescension on his part, was past.

Mrs. Hanson, who had foolishly thought she should confer a favor by making this call, soon realized her mistake. The favor was received, rather than bestowed, and she was glad when her husband rose to leave.

"I trust we shall see you at The Oaks."

"Certainly, sir" replied Mark Dunning, bowing to the owner of his old home.

Notwithstanding the heartiness with which this was said, it was something of a trial to feel that the call must be made, and it required great self-control to manifest no emotion at sight of so many familiar objects.

There had been many changes in the furniture of the house. New carpets were on the floors, a piano occupied the recess for which Uncle Mark had found no especial use, and the highly polished tables had given place to more modern ones, with marble tops. But the heavy carved chairs, and the quaint chimney ornaments remained. The old clock ticked in the hall, ringing out the hours clear and distinct, as it had done a half century before.

Still no allusion was made to the old days, and not one lingering look cast behind, as the visitors left the house.

"A grand old place," — This was the first remark made by Mr. Dunning.

"So it is; but not half so pleasant as our cottage, with its nooks and angles," was the reply of his wife.

"It may not be to you," he answered; and then, as if thinking aloud, added, "Twenty-eight years, since I was in that house before. Yet how short the time seems, to look back. Arthur is older than I was then; and I little thought a son of mine would marry Alfred Hanson's daughter. I hated that man then, and for years after. I thought he had robbed me of my rights, and made me poor, when I should have been rich. I know him now, for what he is, but I have no feeling of enmity towards him. You, Grace, have taught me a lesson of forgiveness."

"How?" she asked, simply.

"By your example. Have you not forgiven all the wrong I did you, all the suffering I brought upon you?"

"Don't speak of that, Mark. It has all gone by, and we are very happy."

"I know it, my dear. But I injured you more than it was possible for Alfred Hanson to injure me. I am thankful I can say at last, that I freely forgive him."

"And I am thankful," rejoined Mrs. Dunning. "I knew you would some time reach that height of happiness."

"Explain, Grace. I don't quite understand your meaning."

"I mean when a person can truly say, 'There is no one in the wide world towards whom I cherish an unkind feeling,' that person has reached the height of happiness. If you have forgiven one you thought your greatest enemy, you are at peace with all men."

"Yes, I am, and I trust, also, that I am at peace with God. I needed that last reminder of my weakness to complete my reformation. It humbled me so that I see all things in a new

light. The punishment I have received has been far less than I deserved. If either of our boys had gone astray ——"

"I have often thought of that, Mark. I wouldn't have Barton like Walter Hanson, for all the wealth of the world."

The happy parents reached their home, and looking lovingly upon the group which welcomed them, Mr. Dunning said, "I sometimes wish I could keep you always as you are now, *my children*."

"We *shall* always be your children," answered Grace, earnestly.

"I know it, my daughter; but selfish people have a reluctance to sharing their treasures."

"Well, Arthur, we have made your call," said his mother, soon after.

"Thank you," he replied, his face slightly flushing. "Did you see Flora?"

"Of course we did."

"And is she looking well?"

"As well as usual," was the evasive reply.

Mrs. Forbes was right, when she said, "The girl was worrying herself to death, for a good-for-nothing brother, who didn't care a straw for her."

"Exactly so," replied Uncle John. "Let us invite Flora and Grace to come out here and stay a week or two. Arthur can ride over as often as he can spend time, and I guess we shall all enjoy it."

As Arthur was more than willing to carry out his part of the programme, and the girls quite delighted with their invitation, it was accepted at once.

"We shan't make company of you," said Aunt Sarah. "You can do anything you please, except wear long faces. If this is the last visit I am to have from Flora Hanson and Grace Dunning, I want it to be a pleasant one. I suppose there's a great deal of sewing to be done, but it can wait a week or two."

It was well that Mr. Forbes was accustomed to hard work, else he might have complained of the large share which fell to his lot, while Mrs. Forbes kept open doors for all who chose to visit her. Attracted by good cheer, good company, or both, Arthur was a frequent visitor at the farm; and altogether there was a pleasant holiday. Flora's health improved. No one allowed her to indulge in anxious thoughts. Walter, who found it convenient to call upon Aunt Sarah, declared himself ready for work, in good earnest.

"I've sowed my wild oats, Flo," he said, as they sat together in the long, low hall.

"I am very glad to hear it," she replied, smiling. "I know you don't like to have me preach to you; but you must let me say that life is something more than a play-day."

"Yes, Flo, I begin to think it is. There's no mistake but I've been too wild, and I haven't treated you as I ought to, either. I'm

going to turn over a new leaf. Father has engaged a place for me with one of his old friends; and before winter, I shall be fairly settled to business. That's the place for me, and I shall do my best."

Walter Hanson was sincere in all this. He had been expelled from school for general misconduct; and however much he might seek to conceal the fact, he was deeply mortified. Even his mother blamed him; while his father was grieved, angry, and thoroughly alarmed. It was time for Mr. Hanson to bethink himself what should be done; and he succeeded in impressing Walter with something of his own apprehensions.

"You cannot go on in your present course, without bringing ruin upon yourself, and disgrace upon your friends," said the father. "I desire your good, and am willing you should choose your work in the world; but you *must* do *something*."

"I *wish* to do something," was the reply.

"What will you do?"

"Be a merchant."

"Easily said, my son. But how do you know that you have the first qualification for being a merchant? It requires good business capacity, industry and perseverance, to be successful, and I am not sure that you have either. You can't go into a large store and take the lead at once. You will be obliged to stand back and see others go before you, in their turn. You won't like that. You'll be judged by what you do, not by what I can do for you."

"I am willing to be," answered Walter with some hesitation; the life his father had described being less attractive than his fancy painted it.

Like many others he had looked to the results and forgotten the labor. It is one thing to gather the golden sheaves; quite

another to sow the seed; and, alas! there are few patient, persistent workers.

"Take time to think of what I have said, and then tell me your decision."

Walter expressed his willingness to do this; but finding serious thinking dull business, he varied the monotony by an occasional attempt at jollification on a small scale. Mr. Hanson discovered this, and exasperated by seeing his son in a state of partial intoxication, threatened summary punishment if there should be a repetition of the offence. "Let liquor alone. Anything but a drunkard!" he exclaimed with a sneer. "How can you disgrace yourself in such a manner? Go to your room and don't let me see you again in this condition."

The young man hoped this would be forgotten or seem of less importance to his father the next morning; but he was disappointed. Summoned to the library, he was there

obliged to listen to a lecture which, had it been enforced by example, must have been effective.

"I will recommend you to no position of trust so long as you associate with your present companions," was said at last. "I don't need to be told who they are. If you can provide for yourself you may do so; if not you must regard my wishes, and I will not have you coming home intoxicated."

Walter's temper was roused; but in his father's present mood he did not dare manifest it. Muttering some apology he waited for what more might be said.

Neither spoke for some minutes, although the father glanced now and then at his son, whose handsome face was fast losing its frank, manly expression. Anger could not long usurp the place of parental affection, even with one like Alfred Hanson. Walter was his idol, the center of his hopes; and the

sickly fear which oppressed him made his lips quiver with agony. It was not in his nature to express this; yet he could not quite conceal it; and before they parted, father and son had clasped hands in truer sympathy with each other than they had before known.

From this time there was a decided change in Walter's appearance, and after a few weeks, arrangements were made for his entering the store of a gentleman with whom his father had been long acquainted, and whose business relations were unexceptional.

"We don't generally like boys from wealthy families," said the merchant. "They have too many high notions, and are apt to grumble at hard work. Poor boys, who have their own way to make in the world, do the best. But if your boy really wants to go up the ladder in the old way, we'll give him a trial. That's all the favor we can show him, and he'll take the place of a young man about his

age, who came to me barefooted, six years ago, and asked for work to keep him from starving. He has been with me ever since. I wasn't mistaken in my judgement of him. I hope your son is all right in his habits. Wine may be good for you and me; but *young* men had better let it entirely alone. You say he is a good scholar.

"Yes, sir, I think he is, although he has no great taste for study."

"Well, no matter for that. Books don't make the man."

All this being accurately reported to the aspirant for mercantile honors, produced a decided effect, and made him look upon the world from a different stand point. He had thought only of amusing himself; now, he considered how he should succeed in his chosen pursuit.

When Flora returned from her visit at Mr. Forbes', she found Walter so kind and affec-

tionate, that the summer days went by swift winged. Mr. Hanson occupied himself in superintending the erection of a commodious and tasteful residence, which rumor said would be presented to his daughter, on the day of her marriage. For once, rumor was correct; fitted and furnished, it awaited her acceptance, although Arthur Dunning would have much preferred a more humble home, which his own means could provide.

"Don't be too independent," said the original owner of the house. "If Flora invites you to occupy the house with her, I advise you to accept the invitation."

When the early autumn days came, there was a double marriage in one of the village churches, which was filled with admiring friends of those who thus assumed the graver responsibilities of life. Grace Dunning was the fairer bride; and as her future home was to be at a distance, it was natural that she

should attract the more attention. The poor with whom she had sympathized, and the children whom she had taught, wept at the thought of losing her from their midst. Her parents, too, would mourn her absence; yet she went forth, with their blessing, secure in the honor and uprightness of him to whom she had given her heart.

After a short absence spent in traveling, Arthur Dunning and his wife took possession of the new house, and commenced housekeeping under the most favorable auspices.

Walter Hanson went to the city fortified with good resolutions, and determined to do his best. It was something to have such a brother-in-law, of whom he was justly proud, and upon whose counsels he could rely. The dangers which would beset his path, and the temptations he would encounter, were so plainly described, that he could not plead ignorance as an excuse for falling.

"You have some habits which will make it more difficult for you always to do right," said Arthur. "It would be better to give up, entirely, the use of tobacco, and all intoxicating drinks."

"I don't know but you are right," was the reply. "Any way, I know I must be careful, and not go beyond moderation."

"You must be very careful, Walter. I wouldn't trust myself with anything short of tee-totalism."

"Tee-totalism is rather too much for me," said the young man. "I don't see any need of going so far. I should hate to feel that I *couldn't* smoke a cigar, or drink a glass of wine. It would make me think about them all the more, and you know that forbidden pleasure has most attractions."

"No, Walter, I don't know that. Children sometimes think so; but one like you should have learned better."

"Perhaps I should," answered Walter, musingly. "But if I have not, I thank you for your advice, and shall remember it. I've been on the wrong track, till within a few months. Now, I hope I've started right; and if you see me getting off, just give me a word of caution. You saved my life, and it ought to be worth something."

It was hard work for Walter to take the place assigned him in Mr. Fiske's store, and perform its duties faithfully. Yet he did it, making no complaint, and expressing no regret at his choice. His letters home were cheerful, addressed to both parents, and not to his mother alone, as they had formerly been.

Mr. Fiske told his father that he was doing well. He boarded with a good family, and there seemed no reason why his new life should not prove a success. Still feeling the mortification of being expelled from school,

he curbed his hasty temper, and sought to please those with whom he associated; and at New Year's, when he had been four months with his employer, he was gratified by being told that he had given satisfaction.

His mother pitied him for being so closely confined, and in her calls upon Flora, made more because Arthur Dunning was what she called a rising young man, than because of any affection felt for her step-daughter, she descanted upon Walter's hardships, and her own loneliness.

"I told your father this morning, that I didn't believe Seth Prescott worked much harder than Walter," said Mrs. Hanson, during one of these calls.

"Seth is very industrious," was the reply.

"I know he is, and there's need enough that he should be; but your father might set Walter up in business. He isn't a poor man like Mr. Prescott."

"No, mother; but Walter must learn to apply himself, sometime; and he will be all the better for hard work now.

"That's the way your father talks. But I don't agree with him. There's a difference between rich and poor people."

"Yes," answered Flora. "But the poor of to-day may be rich to-morrow; and it wouldn't be strange if Seth Prescott should be a richer man than Walter."

"There is no prospect of that," said the lady with a sneer of contempt. "He is well enough in his place, but he never will get much above a common laborer."

"Arthur thinks he will get a long distance beyond that. There has been a surprising change in Mr. Prescott's family since he became a temperate man. Grace did a good work when she visited them on Mink hill."

Flora who knew this allusion to Grace would not be pleasant, was by no means sur-

prised when her mother replied, "Perhaps she did; but I never could understand her taste for associating with poor people."

"She used to say she was brought up with poor people. You know father Dunning was a poor man when Grace was a child."

"Yes, I know, and you thought then there was nobody like the Dunnings."

"I think so now, mother;" and Flora smiled happily as she saw her husband coming towards the house.

Mrs. Hanson left in a most dissatisfied mood, hoping that she should live to see the day when her Walter would eclipse the whole Dunning family. She had despised the father for being a drunkard; yet she felt in some way wronged by his reformation and popularity. In her inmost heart she would have rejoiced at his fall even now."

Small prospect, however, was there of this. His feet were firmly set. Since having once

fallen and come up from his humiliation, he was surer of himself than he had been before.

"I shall never put myself in the way of temptation; neither shall I be so careful to avoid it," he said to his wife, after nearly two years had passed.

"Then I am afraid you will be accepting some office, which will take you from home," she replied, seriously.

"No, Grace, I shall leave my sons to enjoy the emoluments of office. It would be *courting* temptation to trust myself in the arena of public life. My brain might lose its equilibrium in the struggle for place, or heat of debate."

More than once was his firmness in this decision put to the test; and none wondered more at his persistent refusal of office, than did Alfred Hanson.

"I wouldn't have believed it of Mark," he

said to himself, pouring out a glass of wine, as was his wont, before sitting down to look over some papers. "He was always ambitious, and he has talent to do what he pleases. I wonder if he thinks of the old days he spent here. I wonder if he envies me. After all, I haven't been so happy as I expected."

But such thoughts were not to be indulged while there was a way to drown them. One glass of wine did not suffice; and the second was drained before his nerves were quite steady. Through the day, he could employ himself in various ways which diverted his attention from unpleasant subjects; but the evenings, when spent at home, were long and tedious. The society of his wife had no charms for him; and his house now offered few attractions to visitors. He spent less time with Flora than he would, but for fear of Mr. and Mrs. Dunning, whose presence was always a mute accusation of the wrong he had done them.

As time went on, he began to feel the infirmities of age, and having few resources of happiness within himself, he naturally increased his use of stimulants. It required more to get him up to the working point, and the effect of this indulgence was apparent to all who observed him. His face was bloated and discolored; he walked slowly and with difficulty, while he was so fretful that even Seth Prescott, whose abounding good nature seemed inexhaustible, was tempted to leave his service.

"It will turn out just as I always thought," remarked Mrs. Conant, upon her return from the village, where she had been, accompanied by her hired man, to transact some business.

"What will turn out just as you thought, grandmother?" asked Ella Bond.

"La, child, I guess I didn't think but what you'd know. I meant the matter between Alfred Hanson and Mark Dunning. One's

going up, and the other down, pretty fast, too, if I'm any judge of looks. If the old gentleman can see what's going on from where he is, he knows by this time, that he made a mistake in giving away his property. Mark never looked so bad in his worst days, as Mr. Hanson does, and I tell you, there's more punishment to come."

"Why, grandmother, you speak as though you really enjoyed the thought of more punishment."

"No, I don't enjoy it, but I expect it. Folks can't always have their own way, when their way is wrong; and my mother used to say the wheel turned round once in fifty years. I called to see Miss Dunning, and she'd just had a letter from Grace."

"And what did Grace write?"

"I don't know; only she's well, and her baby growing nicely. She's coming on before long, so if you aint gone, you can see her.

That makes me think of another thing. I've had a good offer for this farm, and don't know but I'd better take up with it. We don't want to work away here, after you're gone, and there aint any need of it, either. Your mother and I can live on what we shall have."

"You can both of you live with me," said Ella, smiling and blushing.

"No, I shall do no such thing," replied Mrs. Conant, decidedly. "I can't learn new fashions, at my time of life, and I aint going to be in anybody's way. You and your Charley will want to live different from what we do here, and I'm willing you should; but old folks don't want to change."

"We don't want you to change, grandmother."

"Tut, tut, child. You don't know what you're talking about. I understand such things better than you do."

"Well, mother, did you do all the business you wished to?" asked Mrs. Bond, coming in from a call upon one of their neighbors.

"I found out the price of oats and corn," was the reply. "There, Ella, there's some music as you call it, under the wagon seat. Arthur Dunning's wife gave it to me."

"Where did you see her, mother?"

"She ran out and spoke to me as I was going by. She said Ella wanted to learn the music. I'm glad I bought that girl a piano, if it did take everything I could rake and scrape off from the old farm for a year. I don't know what your father would think of such doings, though, if he was alive."

Ella was back and at the piano before comments could be made, and touching the keys with skillful fingers, filled the room with sweet sounds.

"O, grandmother, what a dear, good soul you were to buy me this piano!" she ex-

claimed, after a half hour's practice, during which Mrs. Conant listened, the very picture of contentment. "I love you more every time I look at it."

"Well, well, child, I'm glad you love your old grandmother, and I guess we're all better for the music you make. I don't see how we're going to get along without it; but I suppose there'll be a way, and we shall find it."

Mrs. Conant had heard something said of Walter Hanson; and later she referred to him in a way which showed that she had been disappointed in her estimate of his character. He still continued his faithful application to business. Pride had much to do with this; but whatever was the motive, the result was satisfactory. The advice given by his brother-in-law had not been lost upon him; although he was not a teetotaler.

"Temperate in all things," as he laughingly reported himself, he was careful not to

overstep the bounds of moderation. He could smoke or let it alone, drink wine or refuse it as he thought best, and this seemed to him a most desirable power.

Four years he had been with Mr. Fiske, and was looking forward to commencing business for himself, when some of his old schoolmates being in the city, they met for a social evening. Supper, with wine, formed an important item in the entertainment, and there was no lack of jest or merriment. Walter, off his guard, drank freely, and as allusion was made to past frolics in which he had borne a conspicuous part, his cheek flushed with anger. His companions excited as himself, gave no heed to this; but continued their remarks accompanied by loud bursts of laughter. At last, expulsion from school was mentioned, with a compliment to the pluck which had refused to make any apology. "I was always proud of you for that, Hanson."

"Stop!" cried Walter. "You have said enough," and his eyes gleamed with a light which those who knew him could not fail to understand, had they been in a condition to think calmly.

"Why, what ails you, old fellow?" was the reply. "Didn't you know we celebrated your pluck in song? Hartshorn wrote the song, and we used to sing it on every possible occasion."

"Sing it, now," said another. "It's tip top, and Hanson deserves something for giving us this treat."

Walter would have enjoyed this once. Now, his face grew white with rage. "Stop!" he exclaimed. "Stop!" But who could stop the clamor of hoarse voices which lingered over the chorus with such evident pleasure.

The last words uttered, the trio raised their glasses, looking to their companion to do the

same. "Drink to your own honor, Hanson," shouted one.

"I will not drink to my shame, and neither shall you," replied Walter.

Glasses were broken and their contents spilled upon the table. High words ensued, which were followed with blows. All were partially intoxicated. Walter seized the party who had most offended and endeavored to hurl him to the floor, when, by a dexterous movement he was himself prostrated; and at the same moment a stream of blood welled from his mouth. This sight sobered all. A tremor of affright ran through the group.

"Good heavens, have I killed him!" cried Williams.

The landlord of the house, whose attention had been called to the unusual noise, opened the door, and seeing, at a glance, what must be done, raised Walter in his arms, and with assistance, carried him to a bed in the adjoin-

ing room. A physician was immediately summoned. A blood vessel had been ruptured, but it was hoped that the result might not be serious.

"How did it happen?" he asked, and the young man who considered himself in fault, frankly acknowledged the truth.

"I suppose wine was at the bottom of it," said the physician.

"Yes, sir, I wouldn't hurt Hanson for the world."

"Miserable way of doing things! Young blood is hot enough, without wine."

Remedies were promptly applied, and when the flow of blood had entirely ceased, Walter looked up, as though he would speak.

"Not a word," commanded the physician. "Your life depends upon being quiet. You must remain where you are, for the present, and make the best of it."

"O Hanson, forgive me!" cried Williams,

without thought of the effect his excited manner might produce.

"Leave the room!" This was Dr. Flagg's injunction; but before it could be obeyed, Walter had reached out his hand to grasp that of the friend who bent over him.

The young man thus suddenly prostrated, was in the flush of youthful vigor, with a large reserve force of strength, and little beyond temporary weakness was apprehended as the consequence of his unfortunate injury.

Any one of the trio who had been entertained at his expense, were ready to remain with him during the night; but this was not allowed. A message was sent to his boarding place, from there to one of his associate clerks, and just the one he would himself have chosen appeared — George Dustin, Mr. Fiske's favorite, who, from a starving, bare-footed boy, had risen to a high position of trust.

Dr. Flagg's directions were carefully fol-

lowed, and morning found Walter much improved.

"Don't speak," said the friend, who seemed to read every expression of his face. "If you wish to send for any one, I will attend to it. Perhaps you would like your mother."

A sign negatived this.

"Your father?"

Still the same expression.

"Your brother-in-law, Mr. Dunning?"

"Yes." There was no mistaking the eager look which made reply, and a dispatch was sent at once.

Fortunately, Arthur Dunning received the dispatch when alone, and without revealing its import, even to Flora, started for the city. Upon his arrival, he assumed all responsibilities, and after making what enquiries he considered necessary, exonerated all parties from any intentional wrong.

"*I* was entirely to blame," said Walter,

when allowed to speak. "The boys didn't know how I felt about old times, and I was mad with wine. Don't let Williams think he is guilty. I've learned a lesson."

Various reports of the affair were circulated; but Arthur Dunning managed to forestall those which might reach the home circle, by writing to Flora an account of what had transpired.

"Don't be alarmed," he wrote, in conclusion. "Walter is improving, and will soon be able to ride. Tell your father and mother; but upon no consideration, allow them to come here."

As might have been expected, Mrs. Hanson wished to go to her son, talking of it constantly. "I know Walter wasn't to blame," she said. "I never blamed him as your father did, when he was in school. He had bad associates."

"Perhaps so, mother," answered Flora.

"But don't let us talk of it. Arthur will do what is necessary for Walter now, and when he comes home, we will all help take care of him. Even little Mark can do something towards keeping him cheerful," and she glanced with all the fond pride of a young mother, at the beautiful boy near her.

"And that's all you care about Walter," said Mrs. Hanson, in a fretful tone. "Nobody cares for either of us. Your father never seems to think of my comfort. Sometimes I am tired of living."

Flora was less moved by this than she would have been had she heard it then for the first time, although there was sufficient reason for complaint on the part of her mother. Mr. Hanson did not regard his wife's comfort; and, indeed, why should he, when he knew so little of comfort himself.

Walter came home and was established in his favorite room. Dr. Graves was called,

and after a careful examination of the young man, said briskly, "You'll need good nursing for a while; but we shall have you all right in a few weeks if you obey orders."

"I am ready to do that if you won't keep me shut up too long," was the reply. "I know I must pay for my folly, but I'd like to settle the bill as soon as posible."

"I guess you came pretty near paying *all* your bills at short notice," said the doctor. "You would have died without skillful treatment."

This led Walter to think very seriously. "It was all so sudden, so unnecessary," as he said to himself, over and over again. Why should he have been angry at the pleasantry which was really intended as praise? Ah, wine was the cause of all his trouble. How much better if he had never tasted it!

Sometimes it was very hard to endure the

restraint imposed upon him. He grew tired of home. His mother burdened him with attentions, urging upon him one cordial after another from which she, herself, professed to have received great benefit.

"Do you take medicine all the time?" he asked one day, when she brought a new remedy.

"I am obliged to take something to keep up my health and spirits," she answered, evasively. "What makes you look so at me?" she added, directly after.

"I was thinking," and he closed his eyes, wearily. A suspicion was aroused which he would gladly repress.

"Are you sleepy, Walter?"

"I should like to sleep," he replied, wishing to be alone.

Not long after this, however, he seemed wide awake, when Flora looked in.

"Getting stronger every day," she asked.

"Yes, and I'm better just now for seeing you. I want to have a good talk on family matters. Do you know that father is a hard drinker, and mother is continually dosing with cordials. Say, Flo, do you know it?"

"I have been afraid it was so," she replied, slowly. "I am very sorry, but I try not to think of it. All I could say would do no good. You know I never had much influence over father and mother."

"I know you never had half your rights, here," was the reply. "I was to blame, myself, and I am glad enough that you have such a good home. Arthur is a splendid fellow, and his father is a man to be proud of anywhere. Don't you love him, Flo?"

No need of answering this, and Walter, who was in the mood for talking, continued. "Mr. Dunning *never* was so bad as people pretended. He doesn't drink so much as a good many others who call themselves tem-

perate. I am beginning to get my eyes wider open than I fancy, about some things."

"I am glad to see them wide open," rejoined his sister, wishing to divert his attention. "You have good care."

"Yes, though I don't need much care. Seth comes in to see me after he gets through work, and he is the best company there is in the house. I am always glad to hear his step."

Walter had been at home but a few days when he received a letter from Williams, full of sympathy, and expressing the greatest sorrow for his friend's suffering.

"That horrid supper has had one good effect," he wrote. "I drank my last glass of wine, then; and the other boys say the same.

"Do forgive me. I shan't forgive myself until I see you well again. I am doing mental penance hourly."

This epistle was soon answered, and the

writer breathed more freely after knowing that there was no longer cause for anxiety.

When the invalid could walk so far, Flora's sitting room was his chosen place for rest, where little Mark amused him with childish prattle.

"Going to bring him up a teetotaler," said the young uncle, one day, after laughing to see with what tenacity Mark grasped a cup containing cold water.

"Certainly. Do you suppose Arthur would allow his boy to taste of intoxicating drinks?"

"No, I don't suppose he would," was the reply. "Any way, I shouldn't if I was in his place. I have changed some of my opinions within a few weeks, and I am getting disgusted with the exhibitions of immoderate drinking I am forced to see."

Flora, who understood the import of this remark, asked a question foreign to the subject, when Walter said, a little impatiently,

"You don't allow me to speak of father and mother. If you saw as much as I do, you couldn't keep silent all the time. It's a relief to get down here, out of the way."

"And I am very glad to have you here; and see, there is Barton."

"He doesn't look much like a farmer, after all, does he, Flo?" said her brother.

"I don't know exactly how a farmer should look. He is a fine looking young man. Father Dunning has given him a deed of the farm, so he is now a landholder."

"Yes, I am a free landholder, you wee bit, responded Barton, raising his nephew in his arms. "You, older gentleman must come over and see what improvements I am making in doors and out. The old house is undergoing repairs."

"Previous to receiving new tenants," added Walter.

"Yes, sir, the rats and mice have occupied it long enough."

"And you are satisfied with your farmer's life?"

"Satisfied! That don't at all express my feelings. I wouldn't change places with the president."

"And is a certain young lady of whom I have heard, as much in love with farming as yourself?"

But Barton was gone, swinging his broad brimmed hat, and laughing heartily.

"Splendid, isn't he, Flo? I wish I was strong as he; and I might have been, but for that confounded supper."

With all his efforts at patience, time hung heavily upon Walter's hands. He longed for the stir and bustle of the city.

"You can't go to the city for three months, at least," said Dr. Graves to his patient. "If you can go then, you may consider yourself a lucky fellow."

"And by that time, find the place I had chosen for myself, filled by some one else."

"No trouble about that," replied the doctor. "There's always plenty of room in the upper stories. I suppose you've heard that before."

"Yes, sir, and it's my opinion there are upper stories in all kinds of business. I guess, too, when you have climbed up to them, you will find them furnished very much alike."

"I guess you will, Walter. It's *how* you do, not *what* you do."

When three months had expired, Mr. Hanson furnished money for the establishment of his son in business, with a desirable partner, and matters at The Oaks went on as usual. The master gave orders, and fretted that they were not fulfilled so soon as given. The mistress drank her cordials, and dozed, when dozing was possible.

Walter prospered. "Everything looks well for our firm," he wrote. "We are doing better than we had reason to expect. Mr. Fiske compliments us."

The marriage of our friend Barton was the most important event in the history of his family, during the next two years. Then, life seemed to him brighter than before. There was a piano in his home, as he had wished; there were books and pictures; just as many as though he had been a lawyer. His friends enjoyed visiting him, as he had prophesied.

His knowledge of bees was far beyond that of Mrs. Conant, who had given him his first lessons in regard to their management; and to sit at his table was literally to feast on milk and honey.

Alfred Hanson and Mark Dunning had lived to see their children well established in life. Providence had ordered that their interests should be somewhat intermingled, both in youth and age, although their characters were so widely different. With every passing year one rose to a higher position, while the other sunk still lower.

"He can't live in this way much longer," said Dr. Graves, speaking of Mr. Hanson to the lawyer. "The quantity of liquor he drinks, would make drunkards of half a dozen men. I am looking every day that a fit of apoplexy will carry him off."

"Couldn't you give him a word of caution, doctor?"

"I have given him a great many," was the reply. "I had a long talk with him about six months ago, and I made up my mind then that it was the last. He says he only drinks what he needs, and he knows best how much that is."

Another month, and the community was startled by the death of Alfred Hanson, dying, as he had lived, without preparation for the eternity before him. Stricken down suddenly, there were no farewell messages to absent friends, or whispered word to others. He fell from his chair while apparently sleeping;

and although he breathed for hours, gave no sign of consciousness.

The funeral was attended by a large concourse of people; but the mourners were few. Strange sight was it to see Mark Dunning's noble figure bending for a moment over the cold form of his enemy, and dropping a tear of pity for the dead.

A will was found, bearing date a few days before Flora's marriage, by the terms of which, after making provision for his wife, the property of the deceased was to be equally divided between his children.

Arthur Dunning was appointed executor of the will, and Walter remained at The Oaks only long enough to make arrangement for his mother's comfort.

The property he received enabled him to enlarge his business; and he looked forward confidently. His gains were sure. Each year he made some advance towards the goal

of his hopes. The world saw in him much to praise, and little to condemn.

He was a temperate man, not a tee-totaler, as his sister had at one time fancied; and here lay his danger, although he scorned the idea of immoderate indulgence. After his mother's death, he seldom visited the old home, but rumors of fast living and doubtful associates were heard by those who watched his career with interest. Arthur Dunning made himself sure that these rumors were well founded, and then claiming a brother's privilege, remonstrated.

"I am injuring no one," was the reply of the young merchant. "If I choose to spend my money as you think foolishly, I wrong no one."

"It is not your money, but your honor, Walter."

"My honor is safe enough. I don't need a guardian," and these insolent words were accompanied by a look of anger.

No response was made to this; and soon the speaker added, "Forgive me, brother Arthur. I am ashamed of myself. Forget what I said, just now."

Forgiveness was accorded at once; but there was reason why this boast should be remembered.

Twice had the earth been clothed with summer verdure, and twice had it been bound with icy fetters, when Walter Hanson came home to die. For weeks and months he had struggled against this conclusion; accepting it only when a council of physicians told him that his case was hopeless.

Never quite so strong after his prostration by the loss of blood, he might yet have lived to a good old age, had he heeded the lesson then taught. Failing to do this, and trusting his vaunted powers of self-control, he had gone on step by step, until the most charitable of his friends pronounced him ruined. His

career of dissipation was shortened by failing health, and now he was forced to continue the use of stimulants, as the only means of prolonging life.

In the clear country air, he seemed to rally; but the improvement was only temporary. He knew he must die; and oh! how illy fitted was he to meet his judge. In health, he would listen to no preaching, as he called every allusion to personal religion; now, religion appeared of all things, most important.

"My business in this world is easily settled," he one day said to Flora. "Arthur will attend to that; but who will atone for my sins?"

"The dear Saviour has made atonement for the sins of the whole world," answered his sister, with a prayer that this blessed truth might reach his heart.

"Tell me more about it," said Walter, clos-

ing his eyes to shut out the sight of all surrounding objects. "Tell me just as you would tell Mark and Meeta."

"I will read to you of the Saviour;" and as she read, she added some words of comment and encouragment.

"Thank you, Flora. Now please to give me the Bible, and let me think awhile, alone."

Groping in weakness, the dying man could but utter the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," until, trusting the gracious promises, he at length found faith to say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

"One thing more I wish to do," he said, as towards the close of a brilliant autumn day, his brother and sister were sitting near him. "I wish to give this place to your father, Arthur. It should have been his at Uncle Mark's death; and it will make me happier to know that he will spend his old age here. My property will be yours and Flora's; and you will have enough without this."

"I can say nothing to your plan," replied Arthur, with much emotion, while Flora could only whisper, "I should be very glad to have father Dunning live here."

"Then let me make my will now. Bring the materials, and see that there are witnesses within call."

The will made and witnessed, Walter Hanson felt that he had done with things of earth; yet for all who called upon him, he had words of kindness and counsel. Only now, that he was about to leave his friends, did he know how much he loved them. Mrs. Dunning, or as the good woman allowed him to call her mother Dunning, spent many hours in his room, while her husband rarely allowed a day to pass, without looking in upon him.

There was no lack of delicacies prepared to tempt his appetite; but he ate little. His life was sustained by stimulants, until the poor

body, decaying while he breathed, grew to be a burden to himself.

After a night of unusual restlessness, he desired that his friends might be summoned; naming each one separately, and asking that they would come for the day.

"Do you think Barton will be willing to spend time to see me die?" he asked his brother, with a sad smile.

"He will be glad to come and stay with you," was the reply. "Father and mother, too. I will go for them, myself, when Flora comes in."

All came. Walter, bolstered up in bed, drained the glass held to his lips, and then said, "That is the last. Take away the stand of medicine."

"But, my dear brother,——"

"I know, Flora, I shall die sooner. That is all, and I am not afraid to die, now.

Weaker, fainter, was his breathing as the day wore on, and, at midnight, a silent group gathered around the dead.

Another life resigned too soon.
Another sun gone down, at noon.

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